# GHOSTBUSTERS: FROZEN EMPIRE

**EXCLUSIVE ACCESS** PAUL RUDD AND CO. ARE BACK FOR THE CHILLING SEQUEL

# TOTAL FILM

**LOVE LIES BLEEDING**
KRISTEN STEWART'S MUSCULAR THRILLER

**EPIC**
MUST-SEE SCI-FI
3 BODY PROBLEM
CIVIL WAR
FALLOUT

'We wanted to do fights in a way that has never been done before'
JAKE GYLLENHAAL

EXCLUSIVE!

# ROAD HOUSE

## JAKE GYLLENHAAL AND CONOR McGREGOR PULL NO PUNCHES IN THE ROWDY, RIOTOUS REMAKE

+

KINGDOM OF THE PLANET OF THE APES ◆ JACK O'CONNELL
THE FIRST OMEN ◆ SYDNEY SWEENEY ◆ ABIGAIL ◆ JOHN BOYEGA

FUTURE

STILL WAKES THE DEEP
COMING 2024
WISHLIST NOW
PC GAMER MOST WANTED 2023
STEAM
PS5
GAME PASS
XBOX SERIES X|S
The Chinese Room
SECRET MODE

# Welcome to

TOTAL FILM

THE SMARTER MOVIE MAGAZINE

It feels embarrassingly appropriate to me that my first issue as editor of *Total Film* should feature two 80s titans like *Road House* and *Ghostbusters*, both of which were unassailable staples of my youth. I can practically quote both verbatim after wearing out my VHS tapes.

So it was a massive thrill to talk to the stars of 2024's *Road House* about their wild new remake, which smashes together Jake Gyllenhaal's megawatt star power and Conor McGregor's chaotic intensity, and grapples with a completely new way of filming fight scenes.

We're also in the edit bay for *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire*, and we've got in-depth features on game-changing sci-fi shows *3 Body Problem* (from the creators of *Game of Thrones*) and *Fallout* (the next big video-game adap), plus a look at cult-favourite-in-the-making *Abigail*, while we're getting pumped for Rose Glass' *Saint Maud* follow-up, *Love Lies Bleeding*. I also interviewed Jack O'Connell, whose electric screen presence I've long admired.

It's an eclectic mix of the thrillingly new and satisfyingly retro, star names and emerging talent, a blend I hope to continue during my time as editor. It's hard to overstate the honour I feel to now be captaining the good ship *Total Film* (stepping into the boots of the mighty Jane Crowther, who continues to contribute). A devoted reader since issue 19 – featuring, um, *Godzilla*'s Maria Pitillo on the cover – and a staff member for more than a decade, I can promise to give it my all to create the best mag possible for you readers (and that young *Road House/Ghostbusters* obsessive who wouldn't quite believe this has happened).

## Enjoy the issue!

Matt

MATT MAYTUM, EDITOR
@MATTMAYTUM

## CALL SHEET
THIS ISSUE'S EXTRAS

EDITOR-AT-LARGE (ACTING NEWS EDITOR)
JAMIE GRAHAM
@JAMIE_GRAHAM9

When discussing *Civil War* on Zoom, Alex Garland was a thoughtful talker. In every way. He carried his laptop with him to open his hotel door to room service rather than leave me behind.

DEPUTY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR
FAY WATSON
@FAYANNAWATSON

I got to witness Sam Rockwell and Bryan Cranston having a lightsaber fight on the *Argylle* premiere red carpet. Lucasfilm, they're waiting for your call...

REVIEWS EDITOR
MATTHEW LEYLAND
@TOTALFILM_MATTL

At this year's London Film Critics' Circle awards, best speech – or rather, best bantz – went to *Anatomy of a Fall*'s real-life partners Justine Triet and Arthur Harari.

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
JANE CROWTHER
@JANEVGCROWTHER

Loved chatting to Kristen Stewart about *Love Lies Bleeding*. She told me I sounded so much like her producer on this film that she wondered if she was being pranked.

DEPUTY EDITOR
JORDAN FARLEY
@JORDANFARLEY

Just as we were finishing this issue, I headed off to the world premiere of *Dune: Part Two*. Catch our thoughts on the movie on the *Inside Total Film* podcast.

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
JAMES MOTTRAM
@JAMESMOTTRAM

Just had a blast in Berlin covering the city's brilliant film festival, which had everything from *Supersex* to *Spaceman*. What a way to spend your February.

# Contents

#348 MARCH 2024

## THIS ISSUE


**34 ROAD HOUSE**
Fight! Fight! The action remake's stars Jake Gyllenhaal and Conor McGregor cordially invite you to enter a whole new world of pain. Fight!

**46 GHOSTBUSTERS: FROZEN EMPIRE**
We talk to cast and creators about why the cool new sequel is something weird, but it does look good.

**52 3 BODY PROBLEM**
The duo behind *Game of Thrones* are back with a startling new sci-fi series. Wonder is coming...

**58 FALLOUT**
It's the end of the world as we know it, and we feel excited for the video-game adap that sees the creators of *Westworld* head off to the Wasteland.

**64 LOVE LIES BLEEDING**
Kristen Stewart and Katy O'Brian on their muscular rom-thriller from *Saint Maud* director Rose Glass.


## EVERY ISSUE


**3 EDITOR'S LETTER**
Plus Team *TF*'s starry comings and goings.

**70 TOTAL FILM INTERVIEW**
Jack O'Connell on *Skins*, stardom, *SAS: Rogue Heroes* and being *Back to Black*'s Blake Fielder-Civil.

**112 DIALOGUE**
This month's postbag: *Poor Things*, expensive sweets and, seriously, *Mac and Me*.


## TEASERS


**7 ABIGAIL**
Alisha Weir goes from *Matilda*... to Splat-tilda.

**10 JOHN BOYEGA**
The Star Wars star is about to reopen *The Book of Eli*.

**11 THE FIRST OMEN**
Horror prequel exploring strife before Damien.

**12 KINGDOM OF THE PLANET OF THE APES**
Everything you need to Noa about the new chapter.

**14 DEADPOOL & WOLVERINE**
A piercing look at the mouthy Merc's MCU debut.

**22 CIVIL WAR**
Alex Garland on his altered-States thriller.

**27 IMMACULATE**
A bloody good catch-up with Sydney Sweeney.

**33 SEAN PENN**
On Pacino, PTA and bold new drama *Black Flies*.


## TOTAL FILM BUFF


**101 10 OF THE BEST**
Bridges! No, there aren't any first-base 'Jeff, Beau...' jokes; we needed to save those for Contents.

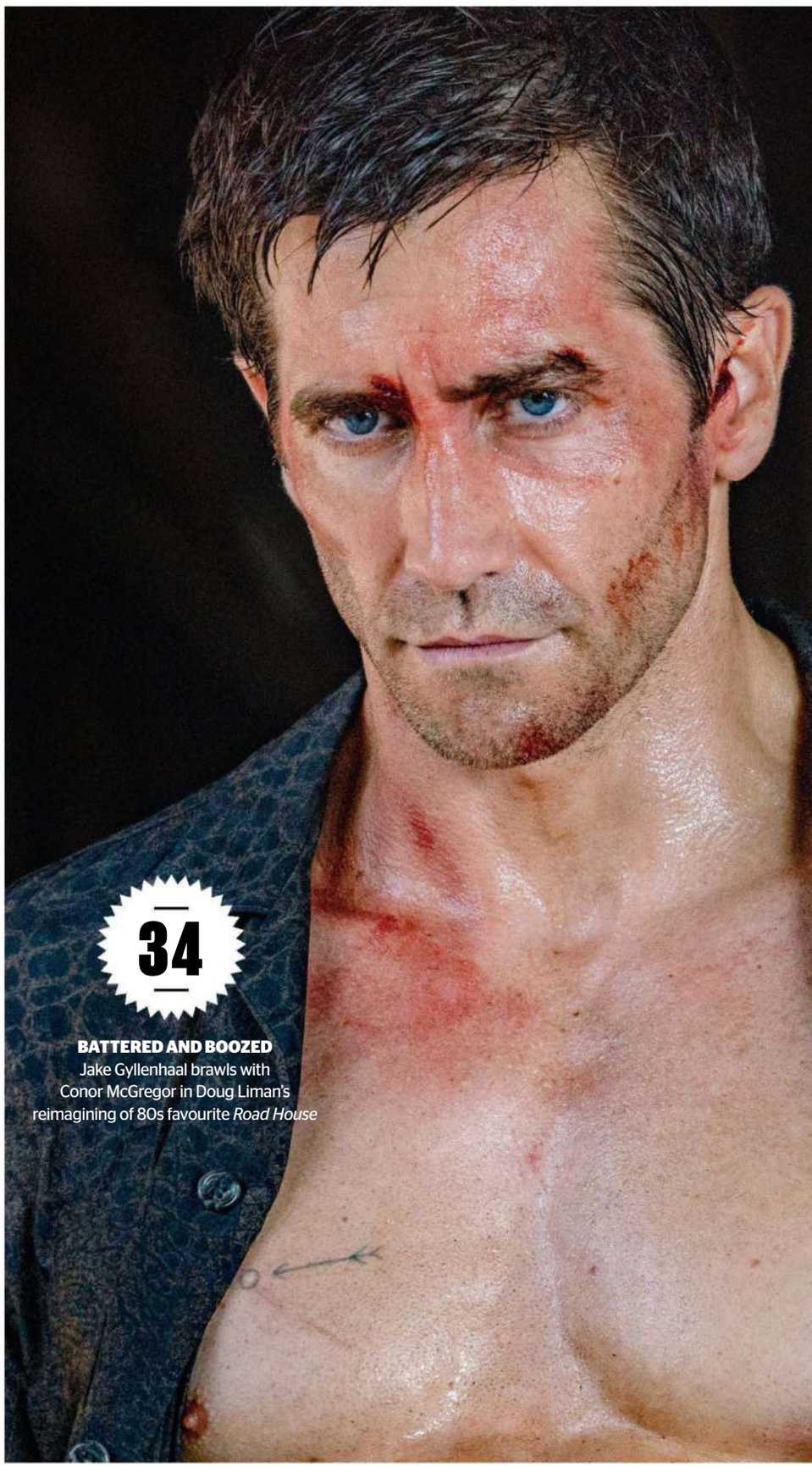
**102 FLOP CULTURE**
Why Cameron's *The Abyss* tanked with audiences.

**104 OBITUARIES**
Saying farewell to Carl Weathers and director Norman Jewison.

**108 GOLDEN GRAHAMS**
Our Jamie chills with a pair of wintry westerns.



SCAN TO GET OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

34

**BATTERED AND BOOZED**
Jake Gyllenhaal brawls with Conor McGregor in Doug Liman's reimagining of 80s favourite *Road House*

7

46

‘WE HAD MAD RESPECT FOR THE ORIGINAL. AND THEN WE TRIED TO CREATE OUR OWN WORLD’

52

64

70

## SCREEN


**80 ROBOT DREAMS**
Quality animation about building relationships. It may well leave you in bits.

**82 SPACEMAN**
Adam Sandler meets the amazing spider-mouth.

**82 LISA FRANKENSTEIN**
Diablo Cody’s corpse-com: exquisite or a bit bloated?

**83 DO NOT EXPECT TOO MUCH FROM THE END OF THE WORLD**
A review whose word count only just exceeds the title.

**84 DRIVE-AWAY DOLLS**
Not Barbie and M3GAN on an awkward road trip, but a Coen-directed crime caper.

**86 LATE NIGHT WITH THE DEVIL**
Chat shows haven’t been this explosive since Emu savaged Parky.

**88 MONSTER**
Hirokazu Kore-eda’s latest drama is scarily good.

**89 COPA 71**
High-scoring documentary about the 1971 Women’s Football World Cup.

**90 MONOLITH**
Best brick movie this side of Rian Johnson’s debut.

**91 RERELEASES**
From an epic 30s chronicle of the 20s to the best 90s movie about 70s teens.

**94 CLASSIC TV**
Spare some time for this revisit to prison drama *Oz*.

**96 SOUNDTRACKS**
Choose! Choose the form of this issue’s musical celebration! Ooh, good one.

**98 BOOKS**
Ironically, a tome called *So Fetch* has, like, happened.

THE LARGEST FAMILY-FRIENDLY COMIC CON OF IT'S KIND

PORTSMOUTH

# COMIC CON

RETURNING 11 - 12 MAY

AT PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL

CREATORS ★ IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES ★ COSPLAY ★ PANELS
GAMING ★ EXHIBITIONS ★ WORKSHOPS ★ MERCH

WWW.PORTSMOUTHCOMICCON.COM

Advertisement

# SAVVY SAVERS, STEP THIS WAY.

Discover cover options for car, home and travel insurance, plus broadband and more.

GO. COMPARE

Get more information and compare quotes at Go.Compare.

EDITED BY
JAMIE GRAHAM
@JAMIE_GRAHAM9

# TEASERS

## FANG GIRL

**ABIGAIL** The Scream team is back with a heist/vampire movie full of biting twists and turns.

**Directors Matt Bettinelli-Olpin and Tyler Gillett, who together with producer Chad Villella form the filmmaking collective Radio Silence, are pondering just how bloody their new movie is. They're no strangers to pumping plasma, having made *Ready or Not*, *Scream* and *Scream VI*. But vampire flick *Abigail* is set to turn up the hose setting as they put the 'eww' into crucifix.**

'I mean, all of our movies are bloody, and I would say that this is definitely the most bloody,' says Gillett, looking to his partner for confirmation. Bettinelli-Olpin grins, saying, 'We spent a lot of time apologising to our actors on this movie! I mean, blood is in the DNA of a vampire movie. And the amount of blood work in this one is…' Now Gillett is grinning, too. 'It's pretty extreme! But it's still fun.'

Extreme but still fun is these guys' raison d'être. For while all of their previous movies have been funny and knowing, they retain a serrated edge. Like the genre movies they grew up devouring in the 80s – *The Thing*, *The Terminator*, *The Fly*, *Aliens* and *Predator* all get a namecheck – Bettinelli-Olpin and Gillett revel in genuinely nasty scares while going about the business of entertaining.

'We're playing it serious,' says Gillett. 'We're dealing with absolutely bananas nonsense, but we take absurd things seriously.' Bettinelli-Olpin cuts in. 'We talk a lot about taking every genre that we're mixing very seriously. The heist movie in this is a fucking serious heist movie, and the monster movie is a serious monster movie, and the character stuff is really emotional and earnest.'

Radio Silence attached themselves to *Abigail* – or *Abducting Abigail*, as it was then titled – in early 2023. A draft had been written by Stephen

Shields, and Universal was looking for a director who could match the energy of the concept: a group of criminals kidnap the ballerina daughter of a powerful underground figure, only to discover she's a vampire. Radio Silence thought that a heist movie colliding with a monster movie was 'just a super-fun, really sticky concept', says Bettinelli-Olpin, and things moved *fast*. Within 48 hours, the project was greenlit, Radio Silence's regular scribe, Guy Busick, was on rewrite duties, and new pages were arriving as the guys entered pre-production.

For the mansion where the kidnappers hole up with their tutu-and-teeth charge, an old, dark house was found outside of Dublin, its various repairs and extensions giving it a weirdly anachronistic feel. And for the cast, they hit gold: *Matilda*'s Alisha Weir, who brings with her a dance background, signed on as Abigail, while Dan Stevens, Kathryn Newton, Kevin Durand, Angus Cloud (who, sadly, passed away after finishing his scenes), Giancarlo Esposito and William Catlett play the crims. Leader of the pack, though, is Melissa Barrera as Joey.

'She's a very smart woman who's had a tough life,' says the actor, who here teams with Bettinelli-Olpin and Gillett for a third time, having played Sam Carpenter in their Scream movies. 'Obviously, she's not a saint. She's here to kidnap a girl. They're all very questionable characters, and I think that's what's important to remember. These people are all dealing with something that led them to this life. The characters were so beautifully written, with distinct personalities, but each actor came in with a proposal of doing something different, and Matt and Tyler get really excited when actors do something surprising. It makes for a very compelling movie where you actually care about all of the characters.'

'Character twists and monster twists' is how Bettinelli-Olpin puts it. To avoid becoming food, the kidnappers must get to know each other and trust each other by losing their posturing and pretences. And as this is happening, they, along with viewers, learn exactly what Abigail is capable of. For Bettinelli-Olpin and Gillett, it was a blast to put their spin on vampire lore.

'There was a foundation that felt traditional, and that gave us an opportunity to fuck with all of these traditions and tropes,' says Gillett. 'We took the lore, which is very hodgepodgey, depending on which movies are canon to you, and we did our version of that.'

Barrera loved it. Growing up, she adored vampires, gulping down *True Blood*, *The Vampire Diaries* and the Twilight films. To reteam with Radio Silence on an original IP bloodsucker movie was a dream.

'They have the best energy and treat everyone with respect and make everything fun,' she says. 'There's such a shorthand now. We just can read each other's minds. It was really, really nice to go into this new world where we don't have the pressures of a franchise that you're tiptoeing around. We get to do this whole different thing.'

Bettinelli-Olpin and Gillett agree. 'On Scream, I think we were always rattle-testing ideas up against what a Scream movie should be,' explains Bettinelli-Olpin. 'But in making *Abigail*, the only thing that we were testing our ideas against was: "Is it weird enough? Is it fun enough? Is it scary enough?"'

'I'm really excited for this movie to come out, and for people to see how Matt and Tyler's brains actually work,' says Barrera. 'I feel like this movie is really violent.' She says it like it's a good thing, which, of course, it is: you need only look at early Peter Jackson and Sam Raimi movies to know just how much fun gallons of gore can be. But, really, is it *that* bloody?

Barrera beams. 'Whatever you can imagine, that's not even 10% of it.'

**JAMIE GRAHAM**

**ABIGAIL OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 19 APRIL.**

Alisha Weir gets her teeth into the role (and Kevin Durand)

Weir on set with Matt Bettinelli-Olpin (centre) and Tyler Gillett (right)

Gillett directs Durand and Weir

**'There was a foundation that felt traditional. We took the lore and did our version of that'**
**TYLER GILLETT**

Dan Stevens and co raise the stakes

UNIVERSAL



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

'So that's a "no" to the garlic, then?'

From left: William Catlett, Melissa Barrera, Kevin Durand, Kathryn Newton

# HOT RIGHT NOW

## JOHN BOYEGA
IS ALL BOOKED UP.

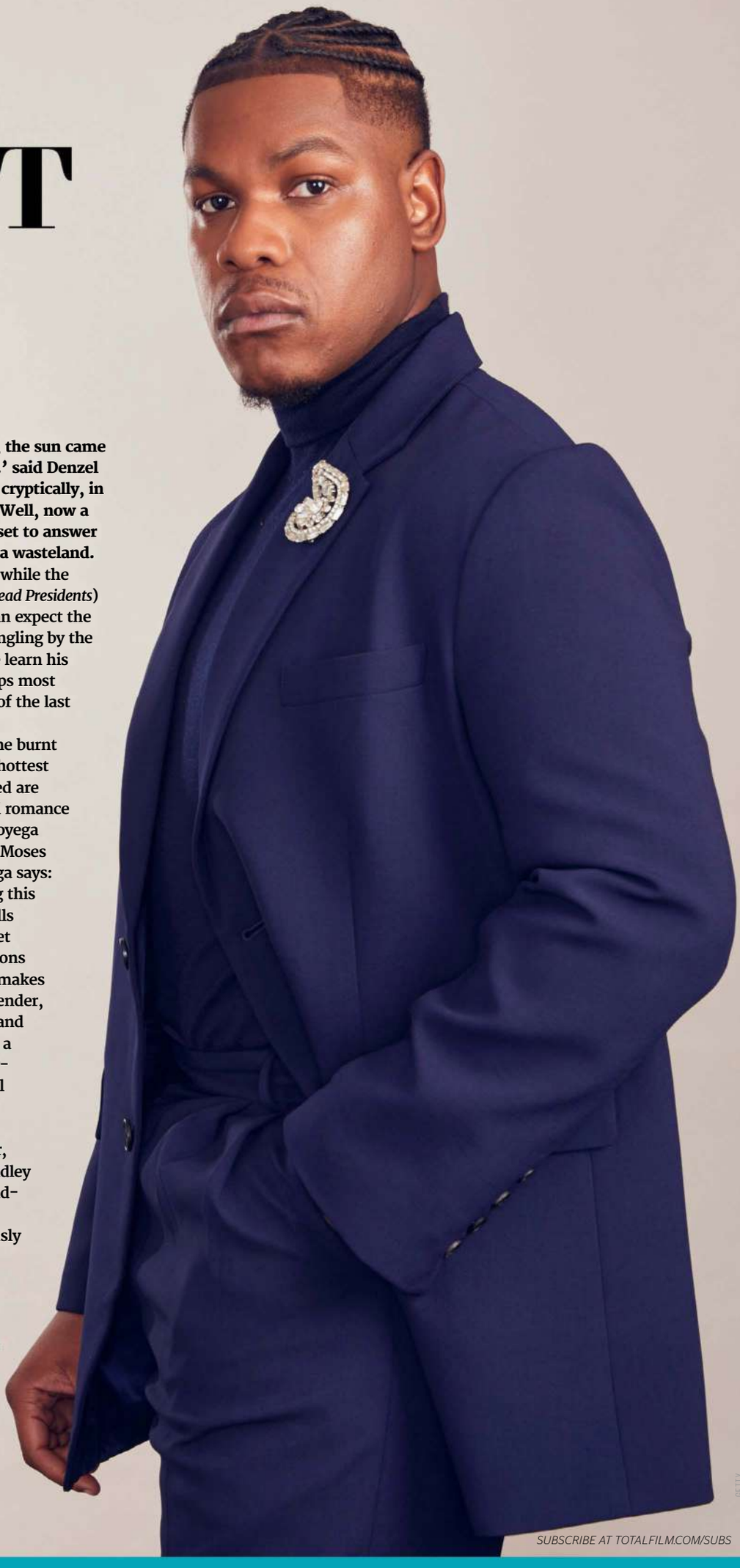
**‘They say the war tore a hole in the sky, the sun came down, burned everything, everyone…’ said Denzel Washington’s blind drifter Eli, rather cryptically, in 2010 post-apocalyptic movie *The Book of Eli*. Well, now a prequel series starring John Boyega as Eli is set to answer what, exactly, happened to turn the US into a wasteland.**

Boyega will also be an executive producer, while the movie’s directors Albert and Allen Hughes (*Dead Presidents*) will shepherd the show to our screens. You can expect the prequel to answer other key questions left dangling by the film: how did Eli become blind? Where did he learn his marksmanship and combat skills? And perhaps most important of all, how did Eli gain possession of the last Bible, key to humanity’s salvation?

News of the prequel series trekking over the burnt horizon confirms that Boyega has one of the hottest slates in the business right now. Also pipelined are sci-fi action movie *Attack the Block 2* and sci-fi romance *The Freshening*. Of the former, which marks Boyega returning to his breakout role of E.T.-slaying Moses for original writer-director Joe Cornish, Boyega says: ‘The idea of coming back to London, shooting this movie and revisiting this character – it just fills me with joy.’ In *The Freshening*, meanwhile, set in a world where the government quells tensions by injecting every American with a drug that makes them see people as only their own race and gender, Boyega’s Reese will go on a date with Sam… and temporarily see things as they really are. ‘It’s a dream to work with John Boyega,’ says writer-director Cathy Yan (*Birds of Prey*). ‘I know he’ll bring incredible depth and nuance to Reese.’

Fans are also willing Boyega’s rebellious Stormtrooper Finn to return to a franchise far, far away after the news dropped that Daisy Ridley will be back as last Jedi Rey in Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy’s Star Wars movie, set 15 years after *The Rise of Skywalker*. Boyega, who has previously spoken out about Disney sidelining Finn, says: ‘I’m open to all characters and scripts that are enjoyable, have a great cast attached and a terrific director.’ **JAMIE GRAHAM**

**THE BOOK OF ELI SERIES, ATTACK THE BLOCK 2 AND THE FRESHENING ARE ALL TBC.**



GETTY



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

Nell Tiger Free plays young novice Margaret, with Sonia Braga as Sister Silvia

EXCLUSIVE

# SATANIC PANIC

## THE FIRST OMEN Turns out that before the birth of Satan's son, things were *really* scary...

**When director Arkasha Stevenson (*Legion*) was seven years old, her mum showed her *The Exorcist*, *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Omen*. Fast-forward a couple of decades and she found herself reading a screenplay that served as a prequel to the last of those aforementioned religious horror classics. And she was hooked.**

'What I really liked was that the script wasn't trying to remake the Richard Donner movie,' she says, namechecking the famous 1976 film that deals with the coming of the antichrist. 'I don't think you can touch that movie. It was presented like a drama – horrible things happening to real people. This script, you fall in love with this one woman, as just awful things happen to her.'

Set five years before the original movie, *The First Omen* sees novitiate nun Margaret (*Servant*'s Nell Tiger Free) travel to Rome with the intent of taking her vows. 'What she finds makes her question her own faith, but also her own reality,' says Stevenson with a wicked grin. 'She's confronted with a dark conspiracy.'

Stevenson promises a 'slow-burn psychological thriller' that 'turns the screw' as it escalates towards 'some graphic moments of body horror'. One of its primary concerns is 'what happens to women in a male-dominated enterprise'. Margaret finds herself in a patriarchal system, surrounded by the likes of Bill Nighy, Ralph Ineson and Charles Dance.

A lot has changed in horror since the original Omen trilogy came out, or even John Moore's 2006 remake. Now, at last, women are getting the opportunity to scare the bejesus out of audiences, with films like *The Babadook*, *Raw* and *Saint Maud* proving devilishly effective.

Stevenson's naturally delighted. 'One of the reasons I gravitated towards horror, growing up, was that I found that a lot of the body horror was fetishised, or hypersexualised. That didn't really resonate with me, but I did feel a lot of fear about my body, and I did have a lot of fear about what could be done to my body, and what people wanted to do to my body.'

Now that's scary. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

**THE FIRST OMEN OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 5 APRIL.**

GETTY, DISNEY

Q&A

## Nell Tiger Free

**We know you from *Servant*. Do you naturally gravitate towards eerie material?**
I'm a big horror buff. I love all things scary and creepy and weird. I also think it's the most challenging genre to shoot. Towards the end [of *The First Omen*], I was a broken woman.

**How much were you allowed to shape Margaret?**
She was a lot of fun to play. She goes on a very interesting – and unexpected – trajectory. We definitely worked a lot of my clumsiness into the character. I sustained a lot of injuries purely because of my total lack of spatial awareness. There's a 15-minute blooper reel of me just falling over shit.

**Would you describe *The First Omen* as a feminist horror film?**
It's definitely got a feminist wash over it. It's a story about taking ownership of who you are, and 'fight the power'.

**Women are delivering many of the best horror movies now...**
It's about fucking time. Unfortunately, you know, it took for the rest of the world to catch up with what is so blatantly obvious, which is that women know what's scary. And it's nice that we're expanding from women only being utilised in horror films to run with their tits out, or to get cut in half by somebody. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

EXCLUSIVE

# NOA'S ARC

## KINGDOM OF THE PLANET OF THE APES New hairy hero Noa heads up a fresh chapter in the apocalyptic primate saga, as past and future begin to converge...

**Humanity's devolution, Caesar's death, his son Cornelius continuing his legacy... it's a satisfying place to pause. Our minds can fill in the gap between the *Planet of the Apes* prequel saga's conclusion and where the story picks up in the original 1968 film, set 2,000-odd years in the future. And yet here comes *Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes*, starting a likely new trilogy.**

Set 300-ish years after *War...*, it follows young ape Noa (Owen Teague), living under the rule of tyrannical leader Proximus Caesar (Kevin Durand), an evolved bonobo who has rejected Caesar's credo and is enslaving apes as he searches for lost human tech. A journey of discovery begins for Noa when the chimpanzee meets Mae (Freya Allen), a young feral human.

'All these trilogies tend to wane a little bit by the end,' says director Wes Ball, known for the dystopian *Maze Runner* films. He had to ask himself, why make a new movie? 'There's something uninteresting about just following the adventures of Caesar's son. The fact that we get to [time] jump and start with new characters, a new story, and have a new perspective on things, opens up a host of new ideas.'

Ball's aim? To balance the tone of the existing trilogy with 'turning a new page'. The music is designed to pull everything together – Ball asked composer John Paesano to take one part Jerry Goldsmith, who scored the original 1968 *Apes*, and one part *Dawn* and *War*'s Michael Giacchino. 'The rest is yours,' he told him. 'These movies are bigger than any director, any actor,' says Ball. 'There is a huge, long legacy. We're trying to make sure that we're staying not faithful [to] but respectful of what's come before us.'

Aesthetically, *Kingdom* stands apart. 'We're definitely our own thing,' says the director. 'Camera-wise, [also] lighting for the environment itself, is very different from the "Vancouver look" that the other movies were shot in.'

Ball was tasked with bringing a new audience to the historically male-skewed franchise. He's tried hard to appease existing fans, but also asked himself if he could make a movie you can take your kids to. '*Apocalypto* with apes', as he initially pitched it, seems a tough call for a family audience, but he stresses that *Kingdom* is fun. 'We tried to find that tone, that sweet spot, where we can open this franchise up to people who haven't seen these movies before.'

Taking the reins of a major, acclaimed series like *Planet of the Apes*, however, is daunting. 'When I was first asked about doing this, I wasn't jumping at the chance,' admits Ball, intimidated to follow in the footsteps of *Rise* director Rupert Wyatt and *Dawn* and *War* helmer Matt Reeves. It's been a steep learning curve. 'I feel like just now that I'm entering the last stretch, I've finally figured out how to make these movies.' **KIM TAYLOR-FOSTER**

**KINGDOM OF THE PLANET OF THE APES IS IN CINEMAS ON 24 MAY.**

**'These movies are bigger than any director, any actor. There is a huge, long legacy'**
**WES BALL**

20TH CENTURY STUDIOS



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

TRAILER BREAKDOWN

# DYNAMIC DUO

## DEADPOOL & WOLVERINE The Merc with a Mouth has a claws to join the MCU...

1

Wade Wilson (Ryan Reynolds) is celebrating his birthday with friends (hi, Peter!) from the first two films. But didn't some of them die? Nothing a time-travel device and some multiverse adventuring won't solve...

2

Who's that knocking at the door? Members of the Time Variance Authority (TVA), as introduced in TV series *Loki*. Wade looks at their stick-weapons and quips, 'Pegging isn't new for me. But it is for Disney.'

3

Meet TVA agent Paradox, played by *Succession*'s Matthew Macfadyen. He offers Wade the chance to be a 'hero among heroes'. Look closely – there's a glimpse of some of the Avengers on the TVA monitors.

4

We can't be sure, but this looks like a glimpse of the movie's big bald bad, Cassandra Nova, who's reportedly being played by Emma Corrin. That bonce highlights her links to Professor X.

5

'Your little cinematic universe is about to change forever. I'm the Messiah. I... am... Marvel Jesus.' Good to see that the Merc with a Mouth has lost none of his ability to shock.

6

After plenty of action flashes and the neat surprise of Aaron Stanford's Pyro from *X-Men 2* popping up, we get the shadowy promise of a Deadpool v Wolverine scrap. Just take our money already! **JAMIE GRAHAM**

**DEADPOOL & WOLVERINE OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 25 JULY.**

DISNEY



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

Joseph Quinn (Michael) and Saura Lightfoot-Leon (Maria) in *Hoard*; Lily-Beau Leach plays the younger Maria, with Hayley Squires as her mother Cynthia (below)

EXCLUSIVE

# JEEPERS KEEPERS

## **HOARD** British newcomer Luna Carmoon's distinctive debut comes straight from the heart...

**H*oard* was never going to be seen,' director Luna Carmoon confides to *Teasers* during the Venice Film Festival. 'I was going to top myself and leave this story that I wrote, this 20-page story, at the bottom of my bed.' Suicide is no joking matter, but Carmoon is serious. 'I was in a strange place. One of my first feature projects just got ghosted. And if you're someone who has nothing to fall back on, these things are heartbreaking. The whole thing can take you down to rock bottom.'**

Thankfully, Carmoon picked herself up and turned her short story into the script for *Hoard*, an emotionally wrought look at an orphaned, grieving teen, Maria (newcomer Saura Lightfoot-Leon), embroiled in a torrid affair with a charismatic but damaged older man, Michael (Joseph Quinn). 'It came from a place of venom and sadness,' says Carmoon. 'When you feel so disfigured inside, you want people to feel the disfigurement on the outside.'

As the title suggests, the film deals with the issue of hoarding possessions, via Maria's mother (Hayley Squires). Like so much of *Hoard*, it came from a personal place. 'My nan was a hoarder,' says Carmoon, recalling that her drawers were full of everything from buttons to magic-eye illustrations. But the way Carmoon sees it, 'hoarding' has other, more metaphysical meanings. 'There's a hoarding of grief in the film, there's a hoarding of love. There's a hoarding of all sorts.'

Wowing audiences wherever it's played, the film scored three prizes in Venice, including a 'special mention' for Lightfoot-Leon's showstopping performance. 'I knew that Europe would get it more than the Brits,' Carmoon says, believing that international film folk would accept 'the ugly' side of her characters. Put simply, it's how she sees life. 'We live in a strange time where we want people to be better. But that's not the world that we live in.' **JAMES MOTTRAM**

**HOARD OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 10 MAY.**

GETTY; VERTIGO RELEASING

Q&A

## Joseph Quinn

**What first attracted you to *Hoard*?**
I remember being sent the script, reading it and being totally disturbed and compelled. And after I had a Zoom with Luna, she's not the kind of person you forget about. She makes such a strong impression on you. And I thought I would love to help this person make this film.

**How would you describe your character, Michael?**
He's a duplicitous, adulterous, manipulative guy, but he's insane. Because he's madly in love... being deeply in love with someone is a form of madness, and you're completely at the disposal of that person. And you're powerless over that person. And it's a really vulnerable place to be.

**You've been in big productions like *Stranger Things* and the upcoming *Gladiator 2*. How does this compare?**
It's amazing, the production team that Luna has, and the support that she has, and they're rallying around her. Because everything is about commerce now, and understandably so. Obviously, everyone needs to pay their bills. But doing something for the art of it is becoming impossible. It's becoming really, really, really hard. This really felt like a labour of love. The fuel in the engine was nothing but creative. Nobody's going to get a holiday home out of this! **JAMES MOTTRAM**

# Contributing editor **LEILA LATIF** has something to say...

Let's not disrespect Robbie by forgetting her talents as a film producer

THIS MONTH...
**WEIGHING UP THOSE OSCAR 'SNUBS'**

**Awards season is a strange time of year for us film nerds. All of a sudden, the 'normies' want to weigh in on The Globes v The Oscars and whether Sandra Hüller's acting performance in *Anatomy of a Fall* was more awards-worthy than her performance in *The Zone of Interest*, despite any sensible person knowing that she actually should have been nominated for 2016's *Toni Erdmann*.**

Hüller aside, online Oscar debates focus on 'snubs' v 'pleasant surprises' and this year's noms had more of the latter. My money is on *Oppenheimer* storming it, but I could not have been happier to see Jonathan Glazer, *Io Capitano*, Da'Vine Joy Randolph, Justine Triet, *Four Daughters* and *The Boy and the Heron* make the cut. And my heart soared when Lily Gladstone became the first Native American to be nominated for Best Actress. There are always people complaining about their favourites missing out and issues of inclusivity, but this year I not only want to leave the internet but potentially the solar system, given how Margot Robbie's 'snub' for playing Barbie is being framed as a slight against womankind.

Firstly, Robbie *is* nominated as she produced *Barbie*, and it's up for Best Picture. This is incredibly cool! The cries of 'snub' here downplay her quirky feminist comedy being in a category typically filled with serious dramas, but they're also outrageously disrespectful of the women nominated. When Hillary Clinton tweeted her disapproval of Robbie not making the cut, the implication was that one of the other women wasn't as deserving, ignoring Gladstone's historic accomplishment and co-star America Ferrera's moment of glory. This pitting of women against women is not something Barbie would approve of.

While I understand Robbie fans' disappointment, actual 'snubs' are few and far between. After all, what makes something a 'snub' is not just that it's excellent but that it's patently the sort of thing the Academy goes for. You don't win for being the best. You win because you were the best at being an Oscar winner. So perfect performances from Toni Collette in *Hereditary*, Lupita Nyong'o in *Us*, Tom Cruise in *Tropic Thunder* or even Leslie Nielsen in *Airplane!* aren't really 'snubs' because they are in no way Oscar bait, and are probably all the better for it.

An example of an actual 'snub' is Denzel Washington not winning for Spike Lee's *Malcolm X* in 1993. Washington was a bona fide movie star, giving one of the best performances ever committed to celluloid, as a complex historical figure in three-and-a-half-hour epic. This is what the Academy usually devours (it's why my money is on *Oppenheimer*), but he lost to Al Pacino. No shame in that under normal circumstances, but he lost to Pacino in *Scent of a Woman*. Ditto Ava DuVernay not getting a nod for directing Martin Luther King biopic *Selma*, Barbra Streisand being shut out for devastating drama *The Prince of Tides* and the frequently billed 'Best Film of All Time' *Citizen Kane* failing on the Best Picture and Best Director fronts.

It's ultimately down to who gets to vote, the influence of groupthink, awards campaign investment, and nebulous ideas of where cinema should be headed. But the outrage shouldn't be individualistic and focused on supposed 'snubs', but around how narrow a path films must walk to presumed Oscar glory, shutting out so much horror, comedy and arthouse. Maybe one year soon, a scary, funny, genre-bending movie that reinvents the form won't be nominated and it will be an actual 'snub' because in this bright future, that's what the Oscars have come to regularly reward. Now that's a snub I'd like to see...

**LEILA WILL BE BACK NEXT ISSUE. FOR FURTHER MUSINGS AND MISSIVES FOLLOW @LEILA_LATIF ON X/TWITTER.**

THE L WORD

WARNER BROS.



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

# THE WORLD'S NUMBER ONE SCI-FI, FANTASY & HORROR MAGAZINE

## Subscribe & save at magazinesdirect.com/SFX

Aimee Lou Wood plays the deposed Queen Dagan

EXCLUSIVE

# YAS QUEEN

## **SEIZE THEM!** Aimee Lou Wood and Nicola Coughlan go to war in this medieval satire...

**The Middle Ages has always been fertile ground for dramatic epics, but rarely since *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* has its comedic potential been taken for a feature-length exploration. *Seize Them!* director Curtis Vowell tells *Teasers* he was well aware of this after attempting to describe his new Dark Ages Britain-set comedy to friends. 'I was like, "It's a medieval comedy," and they were like, "Well, there's only like two films that have ever been made, it's not really a genre."'**

*Derry Girls*' Nicola Coughlan is usurper Humble Joan

At least those inspirations are top-tier, with the Pythons a key touchstone for Vowell. 'If someone wants to reference Monty Python, that means we've absolutely done our job,' he says, adding *The Princess Bride* and the recent revisionist approaches of *Bridgerton* and *The Great* as other influences on the courtly satire, scripted by Andy Riley (*Glued*, *Veep*). 'I wasn't a stickler for historical accuracy, and I just wanted to give us freedom to create our own world with our own rules.'

The approach of balancing archaic settings with contemporary humour was aided by casting two 'fresh, amazing actors'. *Sex Education*'s Aimee Lou Wood leads the way as the petulant Queen Dagan, forced into exile by usurper Humble Joan, played by *Bridgerton*'s Nicola Coughlan. The battle between the two sets up the historical caper that sees Dagan go on the run.

She's not alone though, joined by straight-edged palace aide Shulmay (Lolly Adefope) and opportunistic poo-shoveller Bobik (Nick Frost). Together they set out on a journey to reclaim the kingdom. Add in support from James Acaster, Paul Kaye and Jessica Hynes, and the film becomes a who's who of British comedy. 'I don't really know how we managed to get such a dream cast,' Vowell admits. 'We struck gold.'

Such a roster of talent made for a hilarious set when filming took place during the dark age of COVID-19, with Frost in particular inspiring hysterics. 'He's an idol of mine,' the director says, recalling a stand-out moment when Frost's Bobik delivers a monologue about the many kinds of excrement. 'I would have thought one or two, but it turns out there's maybe 30,' he laughs.

**'We go deeper than just a silly sword-fighting comedy'**
**CURTIS VOWELL**

But while there are plenty of puerile gags to look forward to, *Seize Them!* is as much a coming-of-age movie as a comedy. 'We go deeper than just a silly, funny poo, sword-fighting comedy,' says Vowell. 'It's definitely got depth, and I think that's what these actors can bring to it, more than just their comedy chops.' He pauses before offering a summation: 'I think it's a silly comedy for smart people.' Well, that's certainly an approach to make the Pythons proud. **FAY WATSON**

**SEIZE THEM! OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 5 APRIL.**

ENTERTAINMENT FILM DISTRIBUTION



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

## ‘IF IT’S SHIT, HE’LL GET SLAPPED AGAIN.’

*ANOTHER ROUND* DIRECTOR **THOMAS VINTERBERG** ON CHRIS ROCK DIRECTING A US REMAKE.

## ‘I was the first kid in the UK to watch *Star Wars*... I hated it.’

**JONATHAN GLAZER** WENT TO THE ONLY PRESS SCREENING WITH HIS DAD.

# SOUND BYTES

The month in dialogue and digits.

## 376

THE PERCENTAGE BY WHICH ONLINE SEARCHES OF ‘WATCH **OPPENHEIMER**’ INCREASED WHEN NOLAN’S EPIC RECEIVED 13 OSCAR NOMINATIONS.

## $40m

COMBINED US CINEMA TICKET SALES FOR **SUPER BOWL** WEEKEND – THE LOWEST IN MORE THAN THREE DECADES.

## ‘PEOPLE TALK AND MOVE AROUND A LOT. I’M SHORT AND THERE’S ALWAYS A BIG PERSON IN FRONT OF ME.’

**MARTIN SCORSESE** ON WHY HE DOESN’T SEE HIS OWN FILMS IN PUBLIC.

GETTY

### HIGH FIVE

SPIKE LEE AND DENZEL WASHINGTON WILL TEAM UP FOR A FIFTH TIME TO REMAKE KUROSAWA’S CRIME THRILLER *HIGH AND LOW*.

### GOOD THING

### BAD THING

### RIP

ANIMATION DIRECTOR MARK GUSTAFSON (*FANTASTIC MR. FOX, GUILLERMO DEL TORO’S PINOCCHIO*) DIED OF A HEART ATTACK, AGED 64.

## ‘IT’S A PURE HORROR FILM, AND IT GETS VERY BLOODY.’

**ETHAN COEN** CONFIRMS HE’S RETEAMING WITH BROTHER JOEL FOR SOME GRISLY SCARE FARE.

## ‘YOU DON’T FACE YOUR FEARS... YOU RIDE ‘EM.’

**GLEN POWELL**’S TORNADO WRANGLER IN *TWISTERS* LOVES GETTING WIND.

By royal appointment: Johnny Depp as King Louis XV with Maïwenn as 'commoner' Jeanne

EXCLUSIVE

# KING FOR A DAY

## JEANNE DU BARRY Actor-director Maïwenn confronts controversy with Johnny Depp...

**When Maïwenn met Johnny Depp, there were always going to be eyebrows raised. She's the rebellious French actor-director (*Polisse*, *Mon Roi*) recently fined €400 for assaulting a French journalist. He's the Hollywood star who fell from grace after his court case with ex-wife Amber Heard. Together, they're co-starring in *Jeanne Du Barry*, a period drama written, produced and directed by Maïwenn, set in the court of France's King Louis XV.**

With Depp cast as Louis XV, Maïwenn plays Jeanne, a woman of low birth who rises to become the king's favourite, scandalising the court. 'As soon as someone who has power falls in love with someone who has no power at that time, there's scandal there because it's balancing prejudice… believing that that person is in a relationship for different reasons than love itself,' says Maïwenn. 'It's love between two people belonging to two different social classes. And we are always against [that]… in the 18th century but even today.'

As for Depp's own scandals, Maïwenn, 47, decided it was 'none of my business' and cast him regardless. 'I basically gave the traits that I was discovering about Johnny to Louis XV in a way, and this is why my king has got all the feelings that Johnny [showed] in his interviews. Not so much in the roles that he played. But I got the way he is and what he feels, and I wanted those specific traits to be in my king. Because I think films are documentaries on actors.'

Setting the film in the luxurious Versailles – where the film was shot – was also 'a metaphor' for the movie industry, adds the writer-director-star. Like the backbiting court, the film world can be a place 'where artists are not always welcomed… especially if they don't have a formal training in filmmaking or if they come from a different background or try to do something different'. It's something that mirrors her own experience, she adds. 'The fact that I didn't have a formal training was very much badly judged by other artists.' At least she can now say she's French cinema royalty. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

**JEANNE DU BARRY OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 19 APRIL.**

MIRACLE/WILDCARD/IN 2 DISTRIBUTION; TRISTAN FEWINGS/GETTY

Q&A

## Johnny Depp

**What attracted you to playing Louis XV?**
When I learned that Maïwenn was interested in making the film and making it with me as Louis XV... the actor in you that has the right instincts, which are very interesting, [thinks] 'I haven't done this before. There's a possibility of total failure. I could fall flat on my face. I like it. It's what I should do.'

**Were there ways you could relate to Louis XV?**
I mean, there are things of course that one could relate to. Not in the sense that one believes oneself to be a king... but I've had to adapt my world into the way that I have to live. How do I live? I live behind windows. I live behind car windows, train windows, plane windows, hotel room windows... fucking windows. You could also keep going on but imagine the king [like this]. I've been scrutinised since I was 23 years old. Now I'm kicking 60 in the ass. That's a long time.

**You've been through a controversial period in your career. Do you feel disposable now in Hollywood?**
Clearly I am. The problem with me is when they threw me in the bin, or whatever it was, it was a good experience. I learned a lot from it.
**JAMES MOTTRAM**



SUBSCRIBE TO TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

# ON SALE NOW!

Available at **WHSmith**,
or simply search for 'T3' in your device's App Store

**SUBSCRIBE TODAY AND SAVE!**
www.magazinesdirect.com/t3-magazine

pocketmags Available on the App Store zinio™

EXCLUSIVE

# AMERICAN NIGHTMARE

## CIVIL WAR Alex Garland looks into a near-future where the States are far from united...

**God bless America. This sentiment, repeated so liberally it is often rote, elicits genuine chills when it closes the trailer to the new film by Alex Garland (*Ex-Machina*, *Annihilation*). Uttered by Nick Offerman's tyrannical President, it comes after a series of truly disturbing images – tanks, air strikes, automatic weapons in the streets – that show an America torn apart by civil war.**

The near-future setting and Garland's celebrated history in the genre suggest that *Civil War* might be a work of science-fiction – but the British writer/director isn't so sure. Working with a $75m budget that's nose-bleed territory for both himself and production company A24, he's gone for a level of realism in his new film, and it really doesn't take much of a leap to envision today's divided America finding itself in such a terrifying place.

'There's a certain kind of action film that plays to contemporary concerns, you know?' muses Garland. 'This movie would fit into that bracket. I think if I watched this film, I wouldn't call it science-fiction. It's definitely a genre movie. It's an action movie. In a way, it's like a certain kind of 70s thriller, maybe, that would speculate something happening in a nuclear power station, or with some sinister cabal – you know, *The Parallax View*.'

The trailer doesn't explain how America tipped off the cliff – and nor does Garland as he chats to *Total Film* in an LA hotel. What we do know is that 19 states have seceded, and the Western Forces, boasting an alliance between California and Texas, are fighting back against POTUS and the US military. The story follows journalists Lee (Kirsten Dunst), Joel (Wagner Moura) and Jessie (*Priscilla*'s Cailee Spaeny) as they track the rebels' push through a war-torn country ('What kind of an American are you?' ask Jesse Plemons' soldier in one horrifying scene) in an effort to reach Washington DC.

But wait. Rewind. California and Texas? How could these two states with their polar-opposite political beliefs ever unite? Garland grimaces. 'I would say that I was not interested, and am not interested, in an aspect of that kind of party politics,' he says. 'The way I work in film is usually by posing a question. I'm doing it for a specific reason. And I think in that instance...' He pauses. 'I'm not going to answer that question, but I'll just restate the question that you put: if you are unable to imagine why Texas and California could join forces against a president who is acting in a fascistic way, who is bombing his own citizens, and has stayed in for three terms, then that is its own answer to the question.'

God bless America, indeed.

JAMIE GRAHAM

**CIVIL WAR OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 12 APRIL.**

**'The way I work in film is usually by posing a question. I'm doing it for a specific reason'**
**ALEX GARLAND**

A24



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

Cynthia Erivo (left, pictured with Alia Shawkat) plays Jacqueline, a refugee trying to rebuild her life on a Greek island

EXCLUSIVE

# THE GREEK ESCAPE

## **DRIFT** Anthony Chen's refugee drama features Cynthia Erivo like you've never seen her before...

**When Singaporean director Anthony Chen cast British actress Cynthia Erivo (*Harriet*) in his new film, *Drift*, he sensed this was going to be a unique experience. 'It's a project that is close to our hearts,' says Chen (*Ilo Ilo*). 'The depths of emotions that she has to reach in this film... I think it's one of the most vulnerable performances you've ever seen from her. It might be something that audiences have not seen before from Cynthia Erivo.'**

Adapted from the novel by Alexander Maksik, *Drift* tells the story of Jacqueline (Erivo), a woman who has fled Liberia and made it to a Greek island. So real did it feel, Chen didn't even know it was fiction when he first read the script. 'There was something very authentic about the portrait of this Liberian refugee and it moved me, it haunted me, it devastated me. There was so much humanity in it.'

Erivo was attached even before Chen got involved. Once he signed on, he made sure all of the refugee elements were as authentic as possible, from language used to clothing worn by child soldiers in flashbacks to Liberia. 'We didn't make this film based on statistics. A big part of this film is painting a real portrait of the human experience. It's not one of those refugee articles that we read in the newspapers all the time.'

**'A big part of this film is painting a real portrait of the human experience'**
**ANTHONY CHEN**

Co-starring Alia Shawkat (as a tour guide Jacqueline befriends), Chen sees it more as an intimate character study than a refugee-in-crisis tale. 'She is drifting on this Greek island and trying to rebuild her identity,' he says. 'In the end, for me, it's a very, very universal human experience.' **JAMES MOTTRAM**

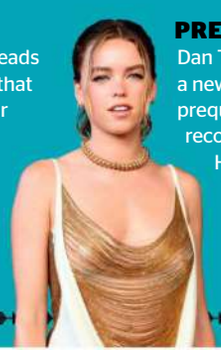
**DRIFT OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 29 MARCH.**

METFILM DISTRIBUTION, GETTY, MARVEL STUDIOS

# SHORT CUTS The latest happenings in movieland...

### SUPER-DUPER

James Gunn took to Threads to confirm the rumours that *House of the Dragon* star Milly Alcock (right) will be Supergirl ('Welcome to the DCU, Milly Alcock!'). It's thought she'll debut in 2025's *Superman: Legacy*.



### PREY DAY

Dan Trachtenberg is making a new Predator movie. His prequel, *Prey*, broke viewing records on streaming service Hulu (Disney+ in the UK). The new film, *Badlands*, is thought to be set in the future and will once more feature a female lead.

### FANTASTIC NEWS

Marvel Studios dropped a surprise Valentine's card to introduce their cast for *The Fantastic 4*: Pedro Pascal, Vanessa Kirby, Ebon Moss-Bachrach and Joseph Quinn make up the quartet, with a release confirmed for July 2025. Flame on!

### TOP MAN

Channing Tatum is teaming up with director Derek Cianfrance (*Blue Valentine*) for *Roofman*, the true story of a charming serial robber who broke into 60 McDonald's via their roofs and emptied their cash registers.



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

# NEXT BIG THING

## SOFIA OXENHAM IS STEPPING INTO HER POWER.

**As Carrie in Disney+ superpower comedy *Extraordinary*, Sofia Oxenham has the ability to channel and embody the dead. It's this shape-shifting quality that has served the RADA-trained star of *Poldark*, *Cursed* and the upcoming *A Very Royal Scandal* – which dramatises the Prince Andrew *Newsnight* interview – well as she heads into *Extraordinary*'s second series and beyond.**

**How much of you is in Carrie?**
I like to think that I'm as good a friend as Carrie is. I definitely have moments of being unsure of myself and being a bit shy, which Carrie definitely has more than me. It's the stuff that you try to hide in your own life, but then being able to explore that on screen is kind of therapeutic.

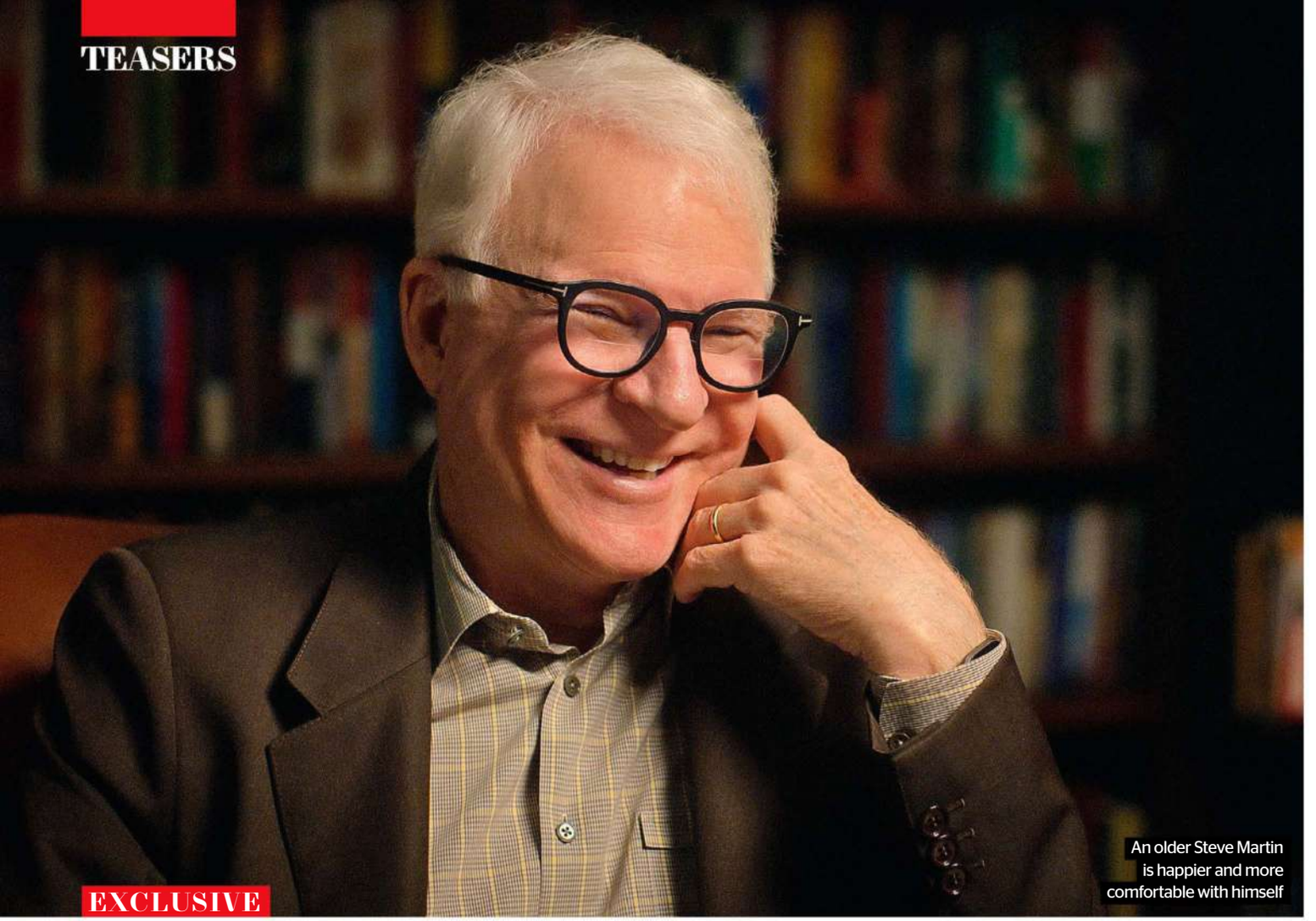
**Carrie can channel the dead – which characters have been the most fun to play?**
From the first series, probably the stuff with [King] Charles [II] because it was just so weird – having to flirt with yourself! Then in the second series, I channel an old Hollywood star from the 1920s. She's really fiery and very sexual, and playing that alongside Carrie was really fun.

**You're about to appear as Princess Eugenie in *A Very Royal Scandal*. How did you feel about playing a real person still in the public eye?**
I definitely felt a sense of pressure to portray her accurately. But I approached it quite similarly to the people I channelled [in *Extraordinary*] in terms of watching loads of stuff, listening to loads of things. It feels strange because she's still so young, and that's her personal life. There's definitely a sense of responsibility.

**You've yet to act on film, is that something you aspire to?**
Definitely. I'm just so passionate about films. Going to the cinema is my favourite thing to do. I saw *All My Friends Hate Me*, and I was the only person in the cinema. I was like, "Oh god. Is this a sign?" **JORDAN FARLEY**

**EXTRAORDINARY SEASON 2 STREAMS ON DISNEY+ FROM 6 MARCH.**

DISNEY



An older Steve Martin is happier and more comfortable with himself

EXCLUSIVE

# ALL ABOUT STEVE

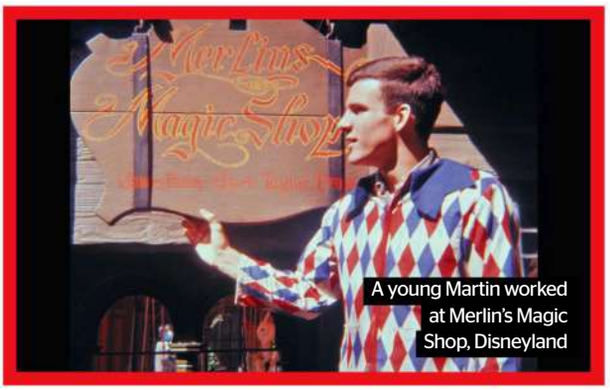
## STEVE! (MARTIN) A DOCUMENTARY IN 2 PIECES Apple gets to the core of a crazy guy...

**What's great about Steve is, he's funny but also intellectual,' says Morgan Neville, who has made documentaries on Bono, Johnny Cash and Keith Richards, but is best known for *Won't You Be My Neighbor?* (2018), the heartwarming, soul-searching study of iconic children's TV host Fred Rogers. 'There's something about that high-culture/low-culture thing that Steve does that I love. You can be stupid and you can be really smart at the same time.'**

As the title suggests, *STEVE! (martin) a documentary in 2 pieces* divides the legendary comic and actor's life into twin sections. The first, aided by a stunning array of archive material, wads of which were previously unseen, tracks his childhood, education, love of magic, jobs at Disneyland, and the 15 years spent chiselling away at an avant-garde routine that reinvented stand-up comedy, until it at last took off and Martin started selling out stadiums... only to walk away. The second section hangs out with Martin now, in his 70s, a devoted husband and father who's dipped back into stand-up and is enjoying the success of TV show *Only Murders in the Building* with his best pal Martin Short.

'The Steve you meet in the second film, you wonder: "How did he become this guy from the guy he was in the first film?"' ponders Neville. 'He had all this success, and then he was like, "Oh, success doesn't make me happy." It's the oldest story. But Steve is somebody who worked on it, you know? Steve is a problem-solver. Literally, he's doing puzzles all the time, and all the things he's mastered – banjo and magic and stand-up – are 10,000-hour pursuits. Turning that on himself was another project that took him years.'

**'You can be stupid and you can be really smart at the same time'** MORGAN NEVILLE




A young Martin worked at Merlin's Magic Shop, Disneyland

Neville smiles. This doc was his dream project – at 12 years of age, he knew Martin's bestselling comedy albums by heart, and got his dad to take him to the comic's last stand-up shows in Las Vegas. But he's delighted for Martin, too. 'He's very happy now, but that took a long, long time. Steve's whole stand-up career, he was alone, always. He now has a comedic partner, a wife, a child, a band, a cartoon partner...'

He also grew closer to the father who never granted him approval, learning 'how to deal with anger and hurt, and how to articulate it so that it doesn't fester'. It's all there in the doc, which, it should be pointed out, also whizzes through his Hollywood career (*The Jerk*, *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*, *Bowfinger* etc.) and is downright hilarious.

'I showed it to him, and he wrote back right after he watched it, and said, "I love it." And then he wrote another email 10 minutes later saying, "Can I show it to my shrink?"' JAMIE GRAHAM

**STEVE! (MARTIN) A DOCUMENTARY IN 2 PIECES PREMIERES ON APPLE TV+ ON 29 MARCH.**

APPLE TV+



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

Cecilia (Sydney Sweeney) enters a convent that harbours dark secrets

EXCLUSIVE

# MOTHER SUPERIOR

## IMMACULATE You can't conceive of what happens in Sydney Sweeney's biblical horror.

**Sydney came to me and said, "Mike, I want to be covered in blood. I want to be covered in mucus."' Director Michael Mohan (*The Voyeurs*) is telling *Teasers* about *Immaculate*, his latest collaboration with newly crowned romcom queen Sydney Sweeney. 'She can do *Anyone But You* and look glamorous, and I just love that she turns to me to make her weird, fucked-up movie.'**

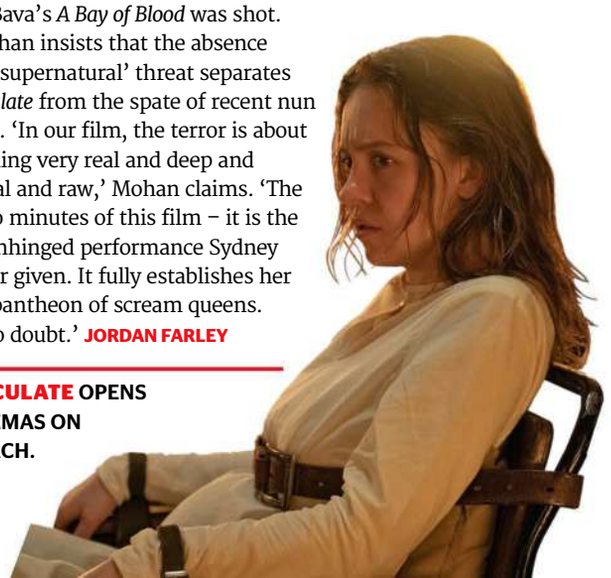
The second feature produced by Sweeney's Fifty-Fifty Films, *Immaculate* has been on the rising star's mind since she first auditioned for an unmade version of the film over a decade ago. After amassing considerable clout in Hollywood, and forming her own production company, Sweeney optioned the script – and knew exactly who she wanted to direct.

'The writing was so good. The scares were so original,' Mohan says, recalling his reaction to reading the script for the first time. 'The reveals that happened genuinely shocked me, which is a hard thing to do, especially for someone who writes movies that have crazy twists in them.'

Several changes were necessary. In the original draft, Sweeney's character Cecilia was chaste. 'I had to tell my good friend Sydney Sweeney that I didn't think audiences would buy her as a high-school virgin,' Mohan says with a chuckle. Instead, the character was changed to a devout nun who undergoes a terrifying ordeal at an Italian convent. 'I liked the idea of taking this altruistic, innocent soul and bringing her to this point of utter devastation at the end.'

A touchstone was 70s giallo; filming took place at Villa Parisi in Italy, where Mario Bava's *A Bay of Blood* was shot. But Mohan insists that the absence of any 'supernatural' threat separates *Immaculate* from the spate of recent nun horrors. 'In our film, the terror is about something very real and deep and personal and raw,' Mohan claims. 'The last two minutes of this film – it is the most unhinged performance Sydney has ever given. It fully establishes her in the pantheon of scream queens. Like, no doubt.' **JORDAN FARLEY**

**IMMACULATE OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 22 MARCH.**



BLACK BEAR, GETTY

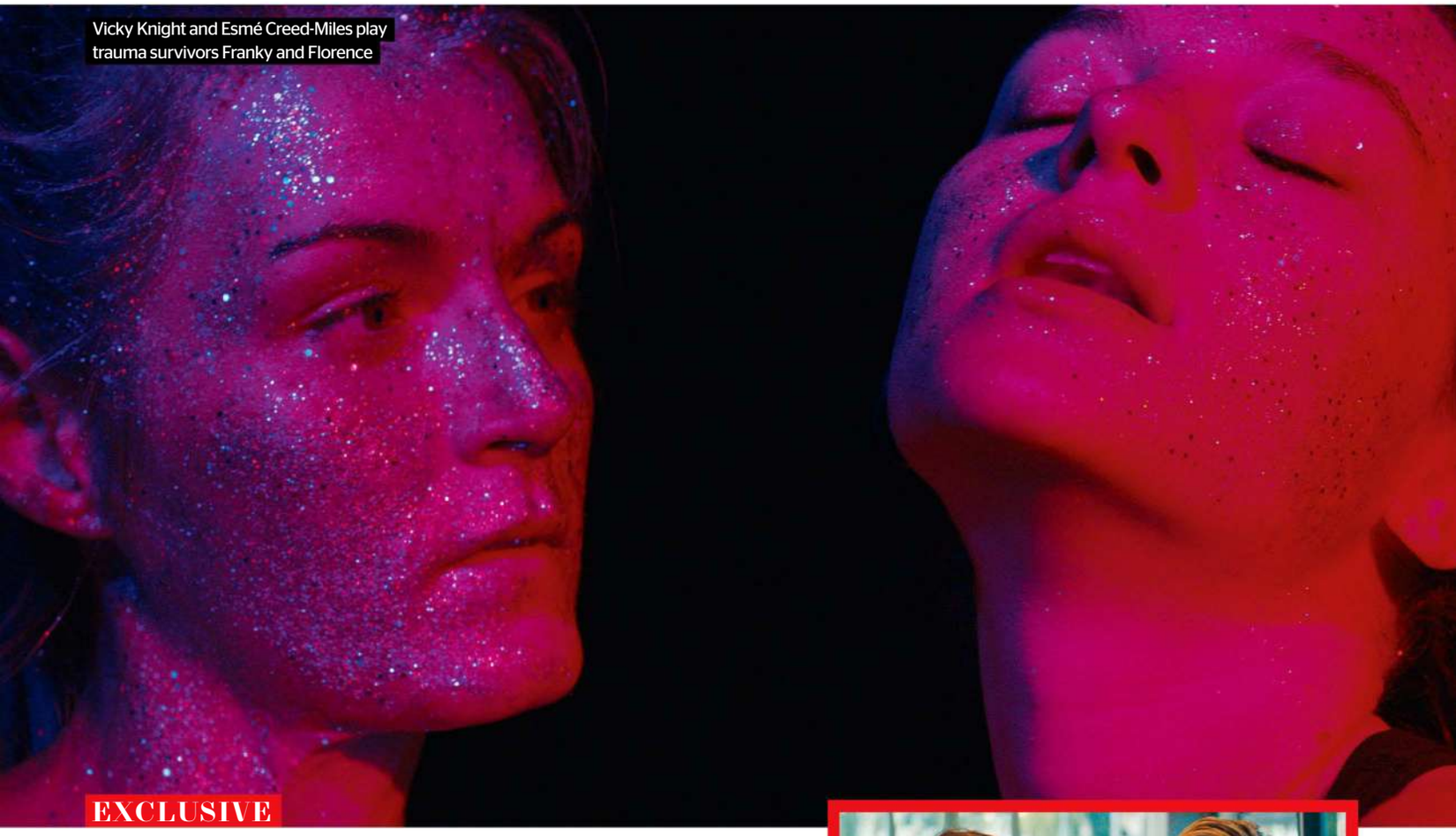
## Sydney Sweeney

**Who is Cecilia?**
Cecilia is a young girl who is looking for her purpose in life, just like many of us. We are trying to find: what is the reason we are here? She is searching for that reason, and it ends up being one of the scariest destinies you could ask for.

**Does '*Immaculate*' refer to the Immaculate Conception?**
Well, you're going to have to watch the movie to see exactly what's been bestowed on her. She has an overwhelming feeling of dread, responsibility and horror. There's a mix of emotions among the [other nuns]. Some people are very, very envious of the responsibility that Cecilia now has.

**Were you happy about being put through the wringer for this film?**
Oh, yes. I was put through such an insane, intense wringer by the amount of blood that was constantly covered all over me. It was freezing cold. I'm running and screaming 24/7. It's a very high-intensity film.

**What does it mean to get your own projects made?**
I'm honestly so grateful to have such an empowering say in my own career. I could not imagine sitting back and waiting for someone to call me and make something happen. I wanted to get to a place where I could make it happen for myself. It's a really amazing feeling.
**JORDAN FARLEY**



Vicky Knight and Esmé Creed-Miles play trauma survivors Franky and Florence

EXCLUSIVE

# ESSEX GIRLS

## **SILVER HAZE** Sacha Polak reunites with Vicky Knight for a tale of revenge and reconciliation...

**It was just memories and stories. And then I just glued them together,' says Sacha Polak, the Dutch director back with her second English-set feature, *Silver Haze*. The first, acclaimed 2019 drama *Dirty God*, starred real-life burns survivor Vicky Knight as a woman overcoming severe injuries. Such was the bond created, Polak and Knight decided to collaborate again. 'When we were travelling [for *Dirty God*], we were on planes and just chilling with each other,' explains Knight. 'We were talking about my life experience. She told me hers. And that's how the script came about.'**

In *Silver Haze*, Knight plays Franky, a nurse emotionally (and physically) scarred from a pub fire 15 years earlier who now seeks both answers and revenge. 'I didn't really want to make a very plot-driven film,' explains Polak, adding that she looked to explore themes including 'coming to terms with your past' and 'how you create your own family'. In this instance, Franky finds comfort in the arms of Florence (Esmé Creed-Miles), a woman who has her own mental health issues, from suicidal thoughts to eating disorders.

While Polak also cast Knight's real-life brother and sister, further blurring the lines between fiction and reality, the writer-director didn't simply replay events from Knight's past. 'It is [about] more than the fire, which of course really happened [to Knight], but the way it happened is a different story.' Instead, she mined Knight's soul. 'And so I think some of the emotions are real. So when Vicky, for instance, tells Esmé what happened when she was in the bar, I think there are real emotions. She was really talking about what happened to her.'

For Knight, it was a chance to build a character through improvisation, filming in an almost documentary-like style. 'We didn't have costume,' she says. 'We didn't have make-up. The camera was there, but we were just so free with it.' Of course, it helped that Knight was cast opposite Creed-Miles, whom Polak had previously directed on TV series *Hanna*. 'She is so charismatic on screen,' says the director. 'She is very natural and willing to experiment. I just think she's phenomenal.'

The pair form an intense bond as they come to terms with their pasts

**'I didn't really want to make a very plot-driven film'**
**SACHA POLAK**

What wasn't so phenomenal was the experience of filming, initially in Dagenham. 'We stayed in a hotel in Romford and it was raining constantly – in the hotel!' says Polak. 'It was really like *Fawlty Towers*. I mean, they were pretending that they were fixing it. But we were there for months. And sometimes we heard screams.' Then they relocated to Southend-on-Sea, 'which was intense because knife fights happened there in the hotel... it was kind of tough.' Making movies isn't all glamour, which only adds to Polak's unvarnished vérité style. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

**SILVER HAZE OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 29 MARCH.**

BFI DISTRIBUTION



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

# BETWEEN TAKES

## LUKE EVANS

ON INDIE SETS, FRESH UNDERWEAR AND SWIMMING WITH SNAKES...

**What's the first thing you do when you get to set?**
If it's a morning shoot, the first thing I do is eat. A lot of people eat while they're having their hair and make-up done. I can't imagine anything worse.

**Do you have any on-set superstitions?**
No, but because I come from theatre, I was always used to being provided underwear. They don't do that on films, but I request it. I just prefer to wear different underwear to the ones I go home in [laughs].

**Do you sleep on set?**
I can sleep anywhere. In theatre, on a matinee day, I would just go into the stalls and sleep on the floor because it was the only peace and quiet I could find.

**What are the main differences on independent film sets like *Our Son* compared with a blockbuster?**
It feels like you have more time, even though you don't. There's a lot less worrying about if that tank is going to explode in the background or if that dragon is in the right place on the CG screen. Independent films, I often find, tell stories that wouldn't necessarily be picked up by a studio. They are more about character, story and long dialogue scenes. That's the joy of doing indies. It's why I did *Our Son*, because it's all about those three characters: the son and the two dads and what they go through. I knew that it was going to be a very intimate, emotional journey.

**What's been your worst on-set experience?**
I did a horror film in New Orleans where I play a psychopathic killer [*No One Lives*]. There's one scene where I climb out the back of a giant man's cadaver because I gutted and climbed inside him. He was about seven foot tall and they made a prosthetic version of him. Then they made the cavity in the back of his body, and that's where I climbed inside and was covered in blood, which was really fun. But with the blood, they make that colour from dye. I was bright red for about a week. It dyed my fingers, my fingernails; my hair was slightly red.

Then on another day, I had to go into a lake, which was stagnant, in the swamps of Abita Springs. We had firemen on the sides and I asked why. They said, 'Oh, because there are water moccasins. [Those] are swimming snakes and they're venomous and very aggressive. If they see the water rippling near you, [the firemen] are going to put the hose on to scare them away.'

**'IT WAS MY FIRST TIME ON A FILM SET, WITH THIS LEGEND, AND I COULDN'T REMEMBER MY LINE!'**

With Christopher Woodley in the upcoming *Our Son*

**And your most embarrassing?**
The first ever time I was on a film set was *Robin Hood*. I was [a] henchman. I had one line and it was, 'Didn't give his name, demands an audience with the sheriff.' That morning, Ridley Scott came up to me and because we had the same agent at the time, he said, 'You're George's boy, aren't you?' I was like, 'Yes, nice to meet you.' He's like, 'Great. You're Welsh, right? I think you should do it in Welsh. Gimme the line.' And I went... [very long pause] 'I'm so sorry, Ridley, I've forgotten the line.' I was so nervous. It was my first time on a film set, with this legend, and I couldn't remember my line! It's only happened once in my whole life and it was on the first job I ever had.

**Have you ever taken anything from set as a memento?**
I have all my swords. I did lots of fantasy and period action films early on in my career, and managed to convince the prop masters to give me all of them. The only [sword] I didn't have was Aramis' from *The Three Musketeers*. And then maybe about five years ago, I went online to see if I could find it. It was owned by a prop-auction company and I bought it. I have Bard's ancestral sword and the black arrow from *The Hobbit*, Dracula's sword, Girion's sword... A lot of my characters, weirdly, have had jewellery, so I have the rings as well. Lovely things. I wear them sometimes. **JOSH SLATER-WILLIAMS**

**OUR SON IS AVAILABLE TO RENT AND OWN DIGITALLY FROM 25 MARCH.**

GETTY, VERTIGAL

EXCLUSIVE

# ROYALLY SCREWED

**SCOOP** Philip Martin brings one of TV's most spectacular car crashes back to our screens.

**Some television moments are forever etched into the public consciousness. The moon landing. The JFK assassination. *Moonlight*'s Best Picture win. And, of course, Prince Andrew using Woking's Pizza Express as an alibi.**

Prince Andrew's car-crash interview with Emily Maitlis in November 2019 is now the subject of the Netflix film *Scoop*, based on the former *Newsnight* editor Sam McAlister's book. The always phenomenal Billie Piper plays Sam, who acts as our guide.

'We come into the story through Sam,' says director Philip Martin. 'She's not someone who goes to Buckingham Palace, so her dealings with the palace and Andrew's team come from the point of view of an outsider.' This starkly contrasts with Martin's previous stint directing the first two seasons of *The Crown*, where 'you're inside the castle bubble looking out and trying to figure out how the world works'.

In this case, the 'bubble' grossly miscalculated how the Prince's account of his relationship with sex offender Jeffrey Epstein would appear. Looking back, it's hard to believe that Andrew famously left the interview thinking it had gone rather well. But as Martin explains, 'Nobody quite knew what it was. Even though they thought they had something great, the journalists didn't know quite what until it landed with the public. It's catalysed by its contact with the outside world and its enormous response.'

Seasoned journalist Maitlis (here played by Gillian Anderson) conducted a masterclass in interrogation, with Prince Andrew (Rufus Sewell) slowly but surely hanging himself with his own rope. But as Martin explains, 'It's not a frontal assault in the same way a Jeremy Paxman interview might be, or that you see in *Frost/Nixon* or *A Few Good Men*. It's much more subtle. That was something we explored. What's the best way to handle the interview? How do you do it? It's an interview by stealth.'

**'It's Rufus Sewell as you've never seen him before!'**
**PHILIP MARTIN**

The event itself occurs around two thirds of the way into the film. 'We basically did the interview as the interview,' explains Martin. 'We replicated the BBC's cameras, and Gillian and Rufus did it for real, almost like a play.' And while Martin is quick to praise the 'poise and intelligence' that Anderson brought to the role, he's equally effusive about Sewell capturing a more controversial figure. 'Whatever your view on him, Andrew has an energy to him. And I think Rufus, just in his physicality, grasped that very quickly. It's Rufus Sewell as you've never seen him before!'

What we witnessed that day was famously described as being beyond a 'train wreck' and 'a plane crashing into an oil tanker, causing a tsunami, triggering a nuclear explosion level bad'. Now who wouldn't want to revisit that?

**LEILA LATIF**

Billie Piper plays *Newsnight* editor Sam McAlister

**SCOOP STREAMS ON NETFLIX FROM 5 APRIL.**

Rufus Sewell and Gillian Anderson, with Keeley Hawes playing Andrew's aide Amanda Thirsk

NETFLIX



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

Wunmi Mosaku stars as police officer Riya Ajunwa, investigating a series of mysterious events

David Threlfall as Jim Bracknell, manager of the local fracking site

EXCLUSIVE

# NORTHERN FRIGHTS

## PASSENGER A close-knit community is torn apart by mysterious disappearances.

**The screenwriting debut of actor Andrew Buchan (*Broadchurch*), six-part thriller *Passenger* casts *Loki*'s Wunmi Mosaku as former Met officer Riya Ajunwa, whose yearning for a big case in the northern town of Chadder Vale is granted when a delivery goes missing, followed by the abduction of a teenage girl. A series of inexplicable and increasingly horrific events follow…**

**Where did the idea for *Passenger* come from?**
**Andrew Buchan:** I grew up in Bolton, where people reacted to major events by squashing and dismissing them with a quip or quick-fire retort. That always interested me, and I wondered: what would be the worst thing I could put in a small northern community, something that would stretch their humour to the limit? Two huge influences are *Fargo* and *Stranger Things*, the way they juxtapose epic with traditional, appalling with bog-standard, horror with comedy, all with a sense of scepticism that keeps it grounded in the community.

**Wunmi, why did you get involved?**
**Wunmi Mosaku:** Andy told me the whole story back in 2016 – it was lovely that he wrote Riya with me in mind. It was a script by someone who knows good dialogue and how characters spar with one another. Every character, every object, every environment has a purpose – nothing feels superfluous. It felt different, dark and comic – not like a procedural.

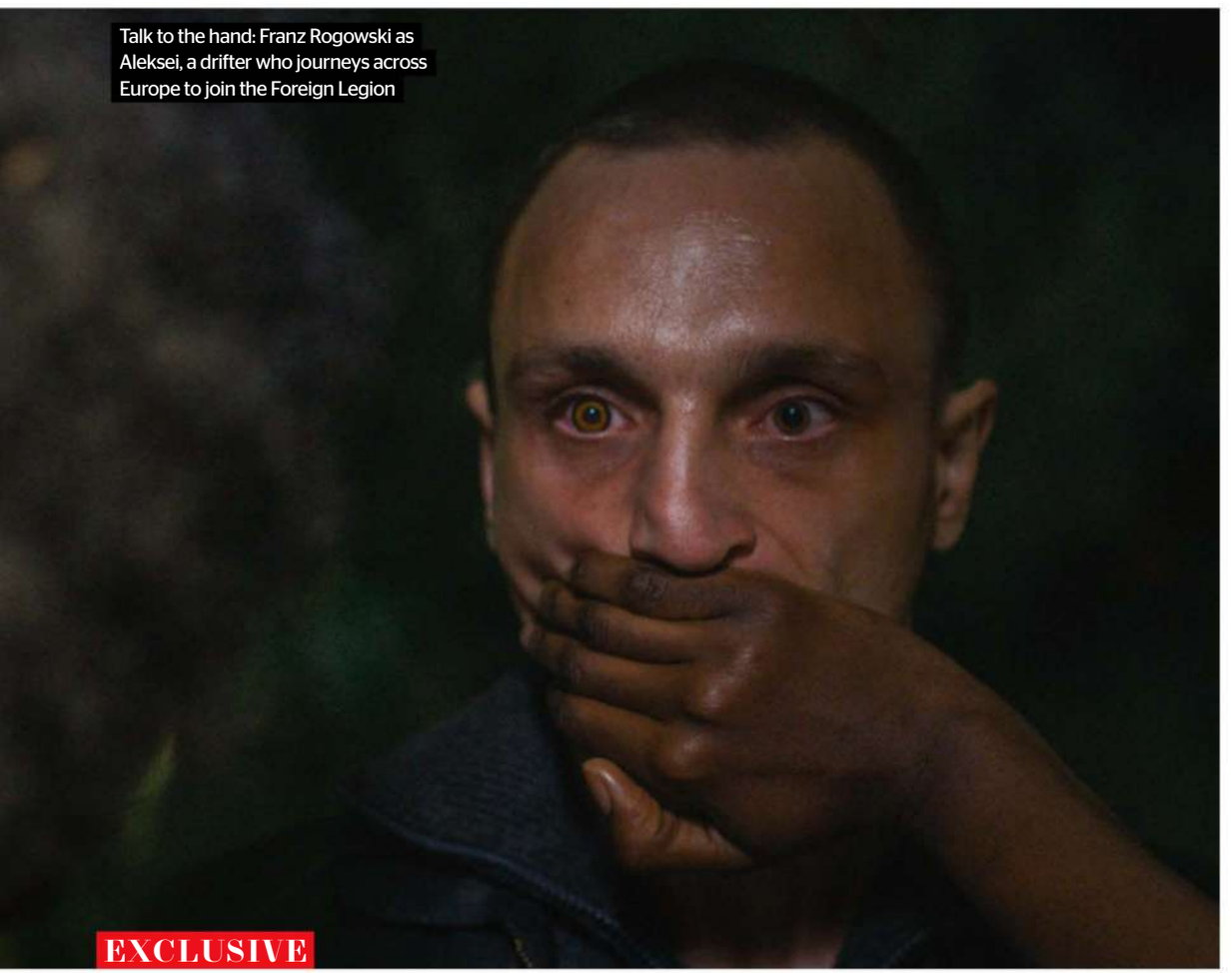
**You've played a few detectives in your time – what distinguishes Riya?**
**WM:** She feels like part of the community: when she's dealing with a crime, it's very much her talking, not the badge. She enjoys being a big fish in this town and, although she does have itchy feet, she needs to figure out what's going on in this place before she moves on.
**AB:** I wanted to write a real 3D person who happens to be a police officer. I find that more interesting than your typical copper who opens the pad, gets the pen out and goes: 'What were you doing on Tuesday at 4pm?' That doesn't grip me as much as someone like Riya who boxes and has a temper.

**'I wondered: what would be the worst thing I could put in a small northern community?'**
**ANDREW BUCHAN**

**Would you class Chadder Vale as a 'left-behind' community?**
**WM:** Definitely. It's the place that time forgot. It feels very much like now and relevant, but also stuck in the past with the cars and the costumes and the props. It's a close-knit community where everyone somehow feels like an outsider.
**AB:** There are a lot of these remote places, tiny villages surrounded by stunning scenery, that you just happen upon. They feel like they've got lost or forgotten about, but they have a deep sense of identity and place and don't like anything challenging that.

GABRIEL TATE

**PASSENGER LAUNCHES ON ITVX IN MARCH.**



Talk to the hand: Franz Rogowski as Aleksei, a drifter who journeys across Europe to join the Foreign Legion

EXCLUSIVE

# SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

## **DISCO BOY** Giacomo Abbruzzese's debut digs into the mystery of the French Foreign Legion...

**Years ago, Italian director Giacomo Abbruzzese met a man in a club – a soldier who was strutting his stuff on the dancefloor. 'I was very intrigued by this,' he says. 'He was embodying these two different [physical] tendencies.' It was enough to light the spark for his debut feature *Disco Boy*, a visually mesmerising odyssey in which Belarusian drifter Aleksei (Franz Rogowski) escapes into Poland and then France, where he joins the French Foreign Legion – on the promise of French citizenship if he lasts five years in the corps.**

The romantic notion of joining the Legion was something that immediately intrigued Abbruzzese.

'There is something, for sure, very poetic [about this]. It has a mystery, it's very iconic,' he says, acknowledging that his film will automatically bear comparison to Claire Denis' 1999 masterpiece *Beau Travail*, which is also set in the Legion. 'It's a movie that a lot of people told me about when I was financing the film but I never saw it.' Finally, he watched it before shooting. 'I was shocked how many common poetic connections there are in the film. This idea of connecting dancing with the soldier's body.'

Nevertheless, *Disco Boy* has its own streak of originality, with Aleksei crossing paths with Niger Delta rebel fighter Jomo (Morr Ndiaye) on a hostage rescue mission in Nigeria. Abbruzzese also recruited music producer Vitalic to create the score heard in the club scenes. 'I wanted these electronic elements that are sometimes lyrical, melancholic and a bit bizarre.'

Even more bizarre is the Parisian disco set in a church. 'I was interested to show the discotheque in an unusual way, in a holy way,' he explains. 'Through dancing, through trance, you can get this kind of connection.' All of this is channelled through Rogowski's spellbinding performance. 'Franz is an artist and not only a good actor. He has a deepness,' the director notes of the rising German star. 'I don't like to work just with people who are good executives. I like to work with people [who] have their own universe.' **JAMES MOTTRAM**

**DISCO BOY OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 29 MARCH.**

## Franz Rogowski

**How tough was it to prepare for *Disco Boy*?**
I think it has been a challenge, but rather a nice challenge. I think the worst challenge is to not know what to do. And here there was a lot to prepare. So, yeah, it was tough – rehearsals every day, dance training, stretching... 1234! But all those are very concrete friends. The harder is the unknown land that you're going into – the unpreparedness.

**How do you see the film? As a story about trauma?**
It's limiting to see this movie as a story of humans, being told to make you understand what they are going through. It's also a fairy tale... I really like to think of it as a painting and not just as a psychological drama of traumatised human beings.

**After this and *Passages*, how are you coping with all the attention?**
It's OK, it's been a couple of years now I've gotten all this attention and I have to be honest with you, I like attention! So, no, I'm very thankful, and I try to give my best. I feel a lot of great opportunities have come along the way and it might change. I'm ready for that. Maybe it'll be over soon. But for now I'm surfing the wave. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

GONIC GETTY



AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

# THE HERO

## SEAN PENN
### THE AMERICAN ACTOR ON LIFE, DEATH AND POLITICS

**I am happy. I feel very alive,' says Sean Penn, the 63-year-old American actor-director, who is loving life right now. And well he might. A regular behind the camera (including the recent *Flag Day* and Ukraine doc *Superpower*), the two-time Oscar winner (Best Actor for *Mystic River* and *Milk*) is still very much in demand in front of it. Next up, the grim-but-stirring *Black Flies* as a New York paramedic, alongside Tye Sheridan…**

**_Black Flies_ is a tough watch. Was it miserable to make?**
I had that kind of misery on this. But I also had great partners in Tye and Jean-Stéphane [Sauvaire, director]. Every hour that we worked together, we never had anything but the most respect and collaboration. I felt very protective of Jean-Stéphane. I just felt the limitations financially… and how he was able to sculpt this thing with those limitations. I was there and I still don't get it.

**How are you when it comes to dealing with life-and-death situations?**
None of that was new to me. I've been next to friends that were shot in the face in Haiti and you drive them to a hospital. There's a certain kind of functionality where I'm not bad with dealing with that stuff.

**Your recent doc _Superpower_ saw you in Ukraine as the war broke out. How was that?**
Psychologically, it was a much safer place than the US. You're getting so much, being present in it. I remember on the second trip… we were in Ukraine when the Academy Awards [saw] Will Smith slap Chris Rock. And I thought, 'It's safer here than in Hollywood!'

**Do you think about entering politics?**
I don't think I'd be good at that… I just get very self-conscious. And when I watch politicians work a room and they've got to remember this person's name… Also, there's a Brendan Behan line that I use sometimes. He was asked, 'Mr. Behan, would you ever go into politics?' and he says, 'I could never go into politics. I only have but one face.'

**Can you remember what first inspired you to act?**
By the time I was working in films… I've had a career of trying to muscle through disappointments and find out how much I really wanted to do it. And not do it. And then finally start to do it myself, making films and things like that. One of the ones that really sticks out for me was [1973 drama] *Scarecrow*. That's one… I can watch it today and still see why it turned me on.

**Of all your films, doing _Carlito's Way_ must've been very special?**
Because of Al [Pacino]? Oh, yeah, well… I loved working with him.

**What can you tell us about your next film, _Daddio_?**
Out of the blue it came like a gift I didn't even know I wanted. It was as beautiful a piece of writing as I've ever read. And the producer, lead actress [Dakota Johnson], and her boyfriend have been really close friends of mine for several years. And they live close by. And she came over and gave me the script for she and I to do. And I read this thing, and I had just the best experience ever. I couldn't wait to get to work every day.

**You're also working again with Paul Thomas Anderson on his next film. How was your time on _Licorice Pizza_?**
I mean, Paul Thomas Anderson is pound for pound as good a filmmaker as this planet's got. And writer. He also happens to have an absolutely gentle bedside manner with his cast, with his crew. I felt very lucky to have gotten to go and play with those guys.

**How do you stay calm amid the craziness of life as an actor?**
Oh, I have a lot to go to these days. And most of the time, I do it. This great dog I've got – it's there, and I like my crafts. My woodwork. And I like a little vodka tonic!

**JAMES MOTTRAM**

> 'PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON IS AS GOOD A FILMMAKER AS THIS PLANET'S GOT'

(From top) *Black Flies*, *Licorice Pizza* and *Carlito's Way*

**BLACK FLIES IS ON PRIME VIDEO FROM 19 APRIL.**

GETTY, ALAMY, SIGNATURE ENTERTAINMENT

# BOUT TIME

JAKE GYLLENHAAL IS THE NEW BOUNCER IN TOWN AS A UFC-FLAVOURED REMAKE OF 80S FAVOURITE ROAD HOUSE FINALLY HITS SCREENS – AND HE'S GOT MMA STAR CONOR McGREGOR TO GRAPPLE WITH. *TOTAL FILM* TAKES IT OUTSIDE WITH THE STARS TO TALK REINVENTING FILM FIGHTS, PATRICK SWAYZE AND OFF-SCREEN BATTLES... **WORDS MATT MAYTUM**

**'The name's Dalton…' Nothing epitomised Patrick Swayze's screen cool quite like 1989's *Road House*, an action film very much of its decade. Sandwiched between *Dirty Dancing* and *Ghost* on Swayze's CV, it cast him as 'cooler' (read bouncer) Dalton, brought in to clean up a Missouri bar.**

Swayze, often the swoon-worthy romantic lead, was convincing as the level-headed but double-hard doorman who could take out the trash while still remembering to 'be nice'. Despite some 80s excesses, *Road House* was a different kind of action film, and a different kind of hero, to what audiences in that era were seeing from the likes of Schwarzenegger and Stallone.

SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

Knox (Conor McGregor) has a simple mission: create chaos

A thinly veiled western – many character names reference classic cowboys – *Road House* is fundamentally a simple story of a new sheriff in town entering the local saloon and standing up against the local bullies who are ruling the town by fear and force. And as such, it's a rare beloved gem that cries out to be remade. It's a story that could be transplanted anywhere.

It's also a film that continues to punch above its weight, despite not being the biggest box-office hit of its day (it took in an estimated $61 million). Jake Gyllenhaal, for one, recalls it grabbing his attention. 'When I was a kid, I remember seeing the *Road House* poster, and it being so intriguing to me as an original idea,' says Gyllenhaal, Zooming in from a break in Paris, casually cool in a black T-shirt.

'And at some point, maybe on television, I remember seeing clips of it, and it was also sparking interest. It really had a strange, intense resonance. And I was of an age when I didn't really know what exactly it was that I was watching.'

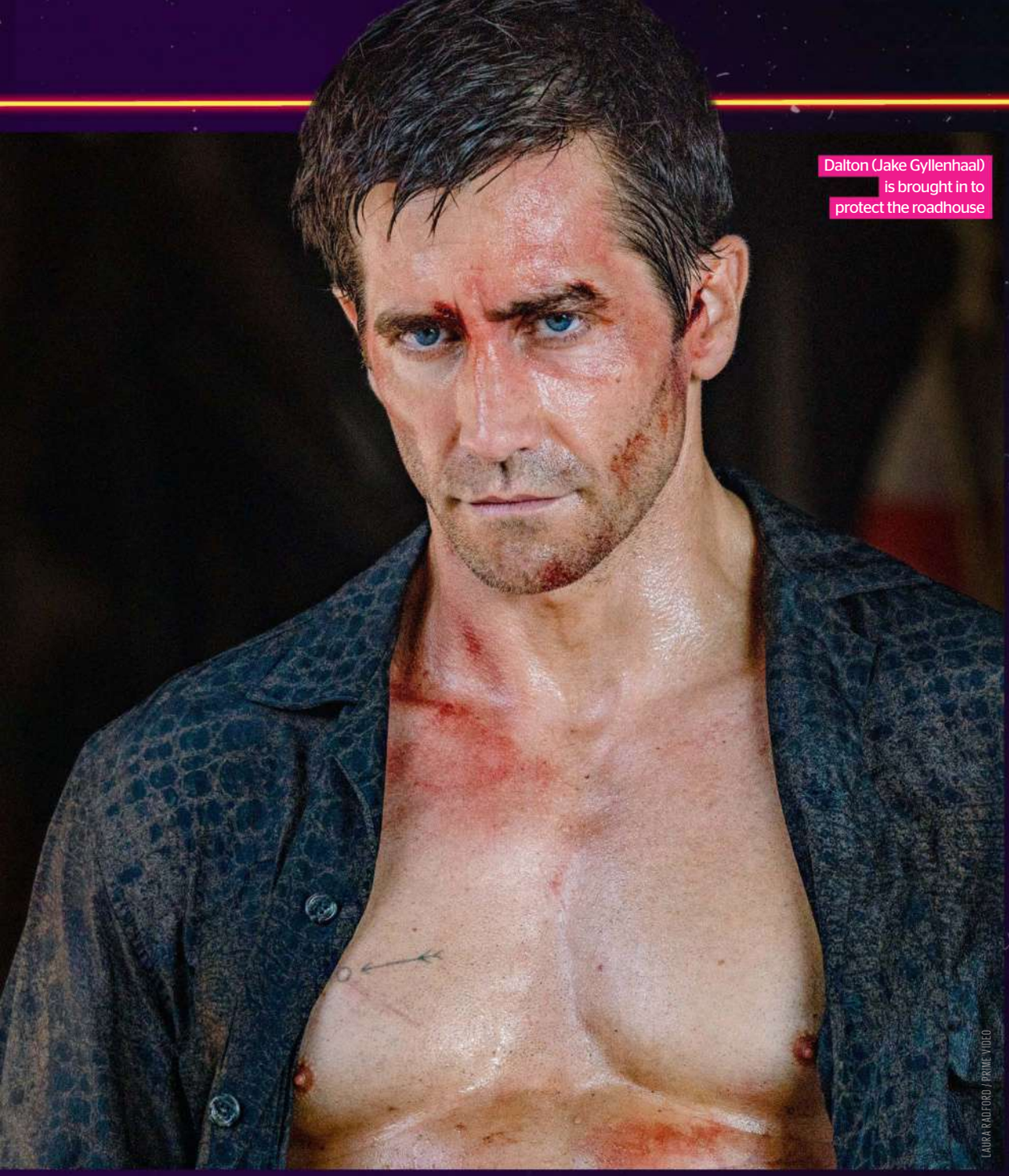
> 'DOUG CAME TO ME AND SAID, "I WANT TO DO FIGHTS IN A WAY THAT HAS NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE"'
> JAKE GYLLENHAAL

Gyllenhaal had previous form with Swayze, having worked with him on *Donnie Darko* (Gyllenhaal's breakout film being something of a late-career standout for Swayze). 'I definitely fanned out, but I tried to play it cool,' Gyllenhaal recalls of working with the original Dalton. 'I never really spoke to him about [*Road House*].'

Remakes have been mooted over the years but never materialised. Gyllenhaal and director Doug Liman (*The Bourne Identity*, *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, *Edge of Tomorrow*) had been looking to collaborate on a movie for two decades, never hitting on the right project. One night, the pair were having dinner, and discussing another interesting project that didn't quite click. 'And then he said, "Well, there is this draft of *Road House* that I've just read,"' says Gyllenhaal. 'It was at the end of the dinner. And I said, "I'm in."' He laughs. 'It was literally like that. I don't know what got into me. It sounded so fun, the idea of reimagining this film.



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS



Dalton (Jake Gyllenhaal) is brought in to protect the roadhouse

LAURA RADFORD / PRIME VIDEO

He said, "I have ideas of how I would want to make my version of this." I just thought, "Absolutely. This is the craziest idea. Let's do it."'

## BRAWL OR NOTHING

And what was it about Liman's vision for his version that made him jump on board so quickly? 'Doug always does action in a different way, and he came to me and said, "I want to do fights in a way that has never been done before." He became pretty much obsessed with how the punches would land, and the kicks would land. He didn't want them to be performed in the way that we have for audiences in the past with that kind of fighting.' More on those scraps later.

Liman is not available for interview – more on that later too – but another thing that stands out with this take on the material (based on a screenplay by Anthony Bagarozzi and Charles Mondry) is that unlike many nostalgia-fuelled remakes, *Road House* takes the basic format of the original, but keeps the references and callbacks to a minimum.

'It's a reimagining, right?' muses Gyllenhaal. 'Doug and I talked a lot about the old westerns, and using that structure, and it's referenced in the movie. We have mad respect for the original. And then we tried to create our own world.'

In this new version, Gyllenhaal's Elwood Dalton – primarily known by his surname, like John(?!) Dalton was in 1989 – is a disgraced UFC fighter with a troubled backstory. At a low ebb, he's offered work as a bouncer in a Florida Keys roadhouse (called The Road House) by its proprietor, Frankie (Jessica Williams). 'It really means a lot to her to protect the roadhouse,' says Williams (*Shrinking*, *Booksmart*). 'She has a legacy to maintain. I also think she's got a sense of humour. But also she's got a few secrets. So she really holds things close to her chest.'

*Euphoria*'s Lukas Gage is one of the out-of-his-depth bouncers reinvigorated by Dalton's arrival. While he didn't grow up familiar with the '89 film ('My brothers made fun of me that I didn't know the original'), he does have some experience of this

## FIGHTING FIT

### HOW JAKE GYLLENHAAL GOT INTO DALTON SHAPE...

***'I had an incredible team around me.*** I recognised that if you're going to do something like this, not only is it about the aesthetic in a lot of ways, but it's also about the functionality of being able to do stunts day after day. A lot of these fights, we were shooting from 7pm to 5am.

***'I had somebody waking me up in the morning*** before work, and we'd work out for an hour-and-a-half. And then I'd get to set, and we would have to figure out what the scene was. And I would work out in the morning depending on what was called for in the stunt, or how much energy I needed.

***'It's weights. It's also fight training. It's also running. It was everything.*** The fight training was the hardest. Grappling is so, so, so intense.

***'I had someone giving me the right amount of calories*** every single day. It's very, very high levels of protein. I had a cheat day every week, and that was something that was always fun, because you could know that you were headed somewhere that was full of sugar [laughs].

***'We definitely got ready for those scenes*** where I'm fighting and shirtless. You don't drink as much water, then you drink a lot of water the few days before, and then you cut out a little bit of sodium. It was a process done with experts. Also, it was just very funny. Doug made a lot of fun of me every time I had to take off a shirt or something like that.' **MM**

McGregor brings a wild and threatening presence to the screen

'I'M NOT AN ACTOR, BUT I'M SHOWBUSINESS. THAT WAS MY VIBE TO IT. I ENJOYED EVERY SECOND OF IT'
CONOR McGREGOR

world. 'I bartended and worked in restaurants up until my early 20s, so I feel like I had my fair share of belligerently drunk people trying to fight you at work,' he laughs. 'That was pretty easy to tap into. I've worked at some pretty sketchy places.'

Another familiar character type is the doctor that Dalton becomes romantically involved with. Here, that character is Ellie (*The Suicide Squad*'s Daniela Melchior). 'Ellie doesn't serve the same [function] that Elizabeth [Kelly Lynch] served in the movie in the original,' Melchior tells *TF*. 'I'm not going to say that it's better or more interesting. It's a different take, because, also, it happens now, or at least later than the period that the original happens. So, of course, women have a different attitude with our flirtations and everything.'

Frankie's Road House has bags of potential given the location (the film was actually shot in the Dominican Republic), but sleazy local businessman Ben Brandt (Billy Magnussen) has designs on it for his own reasons. He's the equivalent of Ben Gazzara's character from the original, but 'something totally new' according to Magnussen, who sums up his character simply. 'Ben Brandt is the bad guy,' he says. 'My job is to make the hero look good.'

And he'll stop at nothing to force Frankie to sell. When Brandt realises Dalton is not going to be moved on so easily, some muscle is called in, which is where MMA superstar and former UFC champ Conor McGregor enters the ring.

## OPPORTUNITY KNOX

One of the biggest draws of the 2024 *Road House* is the acting debut of McGregor, who's playing new character Knox. Brought in to clean house and take out Dalton, he's a powder keg of chaos set to tear straight through his adversaries (and the movie), McGregor's very real fighting skills adding a sense of danger to the film.



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

# FAVOURITE SWAYZE

## THE CAST'S FAVOURITE FILMS STARRING THE OG DALTON...

***Jake Gyllenhaal*** 'I worked with Patrick Swayze on *Donnie Darko*, and loved him. He's such an amazing guy. I had a wonderful time with him, and stayed in touch with him throughout the years. I am not one for lists [of favourite films]. I have made mention of *Point Break* as one of my favourites. I've watched that tons of times, I'd say. *Dirty Dancing* – I just love him in everything that he did.'

***Lukas Gage*** 'I'd have to go with *Donnie Darko*, which brings it back to Jake Gyllenhaal and Patrick Swayze. I truly can quote that whole entire movie. I mean, *Dirty Dancing*, also, is just so good. [*Road House*] is a banger. Patrick Swayze is amazing. The movie is so fun.'

***Jessica Williams*** '*Ghost*, for sure. I am a big Whoopi Goldberg fan, and I think she's incredible in that movie. And he's amazing in that movie. I got to work with Demi Moore in an independent movie that I did. So definitely *Ghost*. He's really incredible in that. That was my imprint before *Dirty Dancing* – it was *Ghost*.'

***Conor McGregor*** 'I was a big fan of the original [*Road House*], for sure I was. It's a classic movie. Swayze is the man. He can fight. He can dance. He can sing. Swayze's done it all. I've always been a fan of Patrick Swayze.'

***Billy Magnussen*** 'Hell f*cking yeah! Patrick Swayze was a beautiful man. I didn't get to see [*Road House*] until I was older, but I found him and Sam Elliott to be incredibly charming and fun. *Road House* is a fun film. Cinema is fun. I hope people remember that film should be a joyous, celebratory time that needs to be shared.' **MM**

ALAMY

When *TF* catches up with McGregor, the 35-year-old Irishman is as much of a force of nature as you'd expect, had you previously witnessed any of his fights or trash talk. He Zooms with *TF* from his phone in bed, where he's just awoken from a post-workout nap (he's currently training for a comeback fight). This is his first interview for the film and, unlike the more polished, media-trained actors *TF* usually speaks to, he's a bundle of unfiltered energy, talking a mile a minute, and excitedly bringing his phone right into his face.

'I was just in awe of it all, to be honest with you, the whole process,' he says of making his film debut. 'I didn't know how I was going to take to it. I didn't know whether I was going to like it, to be honest. I'm a fighting man – that's my bread and butter. It's where I come from... I'm not an actor, but I'm showbusiness. That was my vibe to it. I felt that. I enjoyed every second of it.'

*Road House* isn't the first film McGregor has been offered. 'I had turned down a good few roles in my time on the climb,' he says. 'I've had directors show up at fight camp, really beautiful directors doing really top-end movies... And over and over, they'd come to me, and I always turned them down... I'd leave people a little high and dry. I probably have a few enemies out there that I don't really know of because I had said, "I might do it."'

It's not until some way into the film that Knox shows up but, making one of the cheekiest entrances of the year, he quickly makes his presence felt.

> 'I WAS LIKE, "PLEASE, CONOR, DON'T ACCIDENTALLY HIT ME." I WAS DEFINITELY SCARED'
> LUKAS GAGE

'I was told that Knox could be a gleeful terror,' he explains. 'A lot of people, when they see it, say I'm not even acting. It must have been like, "Hey, Conor, this is it. Action." And I rocked in. But I gave it my best. I had a job to do – a job that I loved to do. So there's elements that I could relate to, myself. I love the fight game. There is disruption. You can cause a bit of chaos in the business that I am in. So I had fun with it.'

It wasn't lost on anyone that the stakes are different when there's an actual certified fighter squaring up for the on-screen bouts. But both McGregor and Gyllenhaal had much to learn from each other. Gyllenhaal recalls: 'He said from the very beginning, which I was moved by, "I'm a white belt in this, and I'm here to learn. So I want to learn about making movies." I said, "Well, I may be lower than a white belt. I'm here to learn as well." We started from that place.'

'I was scared shitless,' says Lukas Gage of his first on-screen fight with McGregor. 'I was like, "Please, Conor McGregor, don't accidentally hit me. Please, whatever you do, do not accidentally hit me in the face." I was definitely scared. He was like, "What? Don't be scared. I've got you." I'm like, "Wait, Conor McGregor could probably kill somebody with his fists, but is the nicest, gentlest soul in the world."'

McGregor tells *TF* that he hit it off with Gyllenhaal immediately. 'Thank God we did,' he says. 'He's so experienced in the movie game and in acting. I'm so experienced in fighting. We just blended together. We knew our strengths, and we knew we needed each other for it.'

Gyllenhaal adds: 'There were a couple of times – actually, almost every time – I had to turn to him, and I'd be like, "Remember, you don't actually hit me." He was like, "OK, let's go!" But then there were times we were grappling, and he's talking to me while we were grappling. He's like, "Right arm under. Wrap your

Conor McGregor and Jake Gyllenhaal face off

## DOCTOR'S ORDERS

### DANIELA MELCHIOR TALKS BARS AND SEEING STARS

**What was the main appeal of *Road House*?**
The fact that it was Doug directing and the chance to work with Jake. I had a chemistry read with Jake. I've always been a fan of his work, and I've never felt nervous with anyone in the industry at all. When I jumped on that Zoom, I remember feeling my face [trembling]. It wasn't anything romantic at all, but it was a different kind of admiration.

**Were you a fan of UFC beforehand?**
The first time that I watched a fight for real, I was shooting *The Suicide Squad* in Atlanta, and I remember going with my friends, and ended up finding Margot [Robbie] there with her friends. We were all at this kind of restaurant bar, watching a fight. I was like, 'OK, that's what Americans like. Americans and Australians, in this case.'

**Did Doug Liman's statement about boycotting the premiere take you by surprise?**
It surprised me because the last time I was with him, I was doing ADR for the movie. Of course, we didn't speak about it. We were just happy to see each other again, and to catch up. So I wasn't expecting it, and I wasn't aware about what Amazon is doing with the movie.

**Could we ever see you as Ratcatcher again in the new DCU?**
I would love to. Every time James posts something, people ask about me, or post something with me, or about *The Suicide Squad*. But I'm excited to watch *Superman: Legacy*, and to see what's the future for DC. So let's see. **MM**

Doctor Ellie (Daniela Melchior) becomes Dalton's confidante in a dangerous world

leg around me. Now pull me up, through the legs." So there was a real exchange.

'He came up to me, and he was like, "I did that last take. What did you think of that? Was it a bit too big?" I'd be like, "Well, you have that. Try this." There was a real back-and-forth between us, and a deep respect for both of our primary occupations.'

## PUNCHING UP

As you'll have glimpsed in the trailer, the way *Road House*'s fight scenes are assembled feels totally new. Garrett Warren and Steve Brown are the stunt coordinator and fight coordinator, respectively, on *Road House*, although the pair admit that when they work together, their titles are pretty much irrelevant.

Frankie (Jessica Williams) cares deeply about her roadhouse

'One of the things that you have to worry about in the movie industry is when a director comes to you and says, "I want to do something that's never been done before," ' says Warren, whose previous credits include *Avatar* and *Ready Player One*. 'Because, let's be honest, it's all been done before, you know? But on this one, it's right. When [Liman] says, "I want to shoot a fight like you see on YouTube, or like you see on UFC" – that's when you say, "Alright, how am I going to do this magic trick?" '

Warren ended up going back to a technique he initially conjured up for *Avatar*, that didn't end up being needed due to that film's digital world: a 'Garrett shot', also known as a 'multiple pass' or 'alphabet shot'. It comprises several stages. First, you shoot a fight in the traditional Hollywood way, with punches thrown and reactions acted.

'The next thing you do is, you remove one person from the equation, and you put a pad there,' explains Warren. 'You say to that [remaining] person, "Hit this pad as hard as you can." And that person lays into it, and hits it with all their might – and it looks awesome.

'And then you remove that person, and you swap. You say to the person [about to be hit], "Do not react. Do not try to sell this punch. Just be ready for the character that you are."

'I take this pad – it's a very soft, square pad – and you jam it at them.



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

Dalton arrives in Florida hoping to rebuild his life

Billy (Lukas Gage) has to learn new ways to deal with trouble

You hit them for real. Anybody – a girl, a guy, a child. It doesn't matter because it's basically a glorified pillow fight.' It means that the body on the receiving end will react physically, as if to a real blow. 'It'll look like a UFC fighter getting hit in the face, and trying to keep their composure,' adds Warren. 'It's wild.'

To finish, they would film a 'slow-motion' pass with the stars play-acting the fight at reduced speed ('Like when you were a kid,' Gyllenhaal grins), followed by a clean pass with no one in the shot. Then all the different layers are stitched together. Warren pulls out the unassuming red rectangular pad that's been used to pummel actors' faces. He also gets up a video to show *TF* the test he put together (where he was on the receiving end of the blows) as a proof of concept.

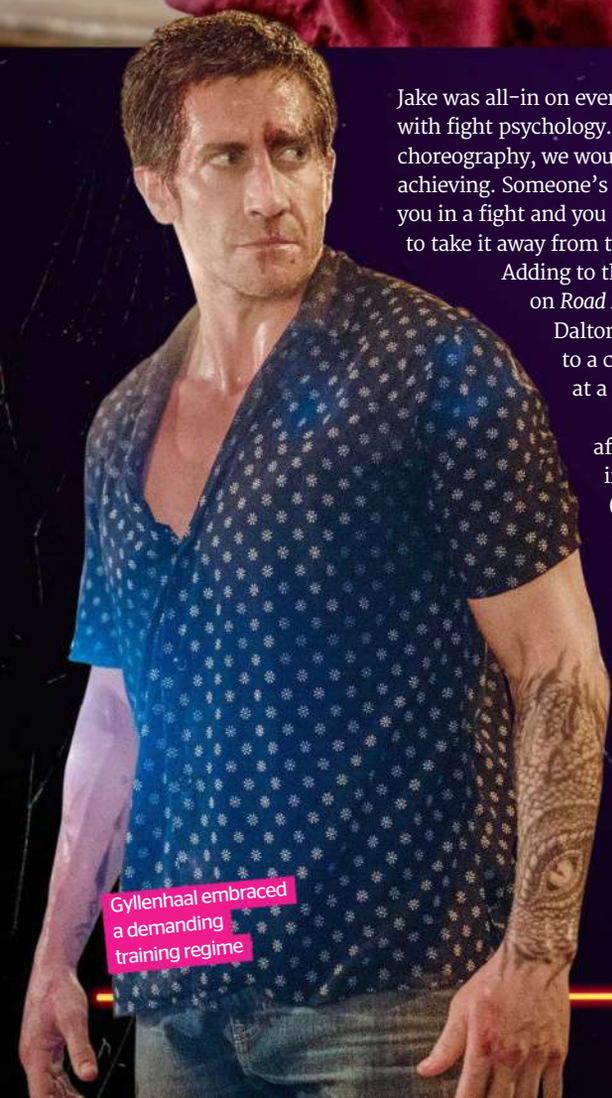
'I thought, "OK, we'll do this magic trick once or twice, maybe three times,"' says Warren. 'But no, not with Doug. Doug wanted to do it the whole time. The shots were never cut. When you see this movie, the fights are way beyond any fight that has ever been filmed in cinema history. This is something that is groundbreaking.'

The pad went through a lot of fine-tuning, with an R&D period where Warren and Brown were repeatedly hitting each other in the face. 'We had to figure out which one would displace the body, but not overwhelm the brain and the face too much,' explains Brown.

Warren and Brown both have extensive fight experience in their own backgrounds, bringing another dimension to the on-screen fights. 'There's a lot of psychological warfare that goes into a real fight,' explains Brown. 'I think this is one of the things that truly makes this movie special.

**'THE FIGHTS ARE WAY BEYOND ANY FIGHT THAT HAS EVER BEEN FILMED IN CINEMA HISTORY'**
STUNT COORDINATOR GARRETT WARREN

Dalton proves that he is not here to be messed with



Gyllenhaal embraced a demanding training regime

Jake was all-in on every facet. He was so intrigued with fight psychology. When we would train fight choreography, we would talk to him about what he's achieving. Someone's trying to impose their will on you in a fight and you can't let them, or you have to take it away from them.'

Adding to the action quotient of this take on *Road House* is the UFC element of Dalton's past. This includes flashbacks to a career sequence that were filmed at a real UFC event.

'I was on a high for four days after,' Gyllenhaal says of filming in front of a real Vegas audience (which had to be postponed by a few months after he caught COVID just before the first attempt). 'It was so exciting.' Footage of Gyllenhaal filming his weigh-ins and fight highlights went viral at the time, and the team had only minutes at a time to shoot between the real pay-per-view fights taking place.

'And they keep coming up to us, and now they'd be like, "You have two more minutes," ' explains Gyllenhaal. 'And we're like, "OK, we can still get this!" And we were actually doing a fight – a fake fight, but our fake fight – in front of UFC fans. Man, they were so great.'

It was another way in which McGregor's career experience proved invaluable. During that Vegas shoot, McGregor was on his home turf, but he wasn't there to fight. 'I went on before the weigh-ins, just right before Jake comes on, and got the crowd going,' McGregor beams. 'I told them all, "Guys, you're going to be in the greatest movie. It's my first movie. We're going to blow the roof off this. Give it up for Jake Gyllenhaal!" And then I went into the crowd, and I was hyping up the crowd. So we got the absolute full effect of it.'

## NO HOLDS BAR(RED)

There has been another significant bust-up that has occurred outside of the making of the film. Shortly before the film's first trailer dropped, Doug Liman announced that he would be boycotting the film's South by Southwest premiere. His pride in the film shines through, but the extended statement excoriates Amazon MGM Studios for not releasing the film in cinemas (it will premiere on streaming service Prime Video). 'If we don't put tentpole movies in movie theatres, there won't be movie theatres in the future,' he writes, in a column for *Deadline*.

Gyllenhaal is diplomatic when *TF* asks about his reaction to Liman's statement. 'I adore Doug's tenacity, and I think he is advocating for filmmakers, and film in the cinema, and theatrical releases. But, I mean,

Stunt coordinator Garrett Warren preps a fight scene with McGregor

Brandt (Billy Magnussen) wants possession of the roadhouse for himself

McGregor and Gyllenhaal maintained a strong mutual respect during filming

McGregor takes to the water for some close-up filming

Amazon was always clear that it was streaming. I just want as many people to see it as possible. And I think we're living in a world that's changing in how we see and watch movies, and how they're made. What's clear to me, and what I loved so much, was [Liman's] deep love for this movie, and his pride at how much he cares for it, how good he feels it is, and how much people should see it.'

**'WE'RE LIVING IN A WORLD THAT'S CHANGING IN HOW WE WATCH MOVIES, AND HOW THEY'RE MADE'**
**JAKE GYLLENHAAL**

Gyllenhaal professes to being a lover of the cinema experience, but adds: 'I've also sat watching a film on my computer, or in different places, and been so profoundly moved. If the job of a story is to move people, I have been moved in both forms. I'm a deep lover of cinema and the theatrical release – but I also do really embrace the streaming world.'

McGregor is typically forthright when he gets on to the subject. 'I'd love for it to be in theatres, he says. 'I'm for the theatre. I understand the business, also… I'd love a call with Bezos.'

'As an actor, so much of the end product is out of your hands,' considers Williams. 'So you have to learn early on to not have an attachment to the outcome. It passes through so many hands. I think growth, for me, as an actor is – every time I step on the screen – giving it 100%, and then letting it go.'

Liman's decision doesn't seem to have soured any of his cast on the experience. 'Doug is one for risk and adventure in his real life,' says Gyllenhaal on fulfilling the 20-year journey to their collaboration. 'And so there was this sense of wonderful risk when you're working with him… I just adore Doug. It was great fun.'

Clearly proud of this experience, Gyllenhaal is open to revisiting the character in the future. 'I love Dalton,' he says. 'I love what we've created in the character, and the whole team that made him. I'd be remiss in saying that Dalton is just me. There's five incredible stunt guys, also, that created him too – like on any of these movies. I would love to work with them, and I would love to be back in the sort of attitude that is Dalton.'

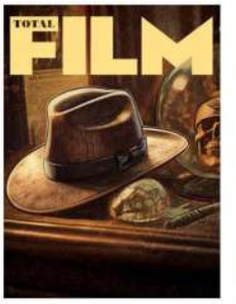
It's less clear what McGregor's on-screen future holds, especially as he gears up for his MMA comeback. 'I don't know,' he responds when *TF* asks if there's more acting ahead for him. 'I'm happy I've got one [film] done. I've got one great one, and it's an all-timer. I learned good lessons on the craft.' Though he does tease, 'Knox doesn't go down without a fight.'

For all the challenges in the making of *Road House*, don't bet against another round.

**ROAD HOUSE STREAMS ON PRIME VIDEO FROM 21 MARCH.**

# TOTAL FILM

SAVE 35%




# SUBSCRIBE TODAY
## AND ENJOY GREAT SAVINGS!

**TERMS & CONDITIONS** * Offer closes 28 March 2024. Offer open to new UK subscribers only. Please allow up to six weeks for delivery of your first subscription issue (up to eight weeks overseas). The full subscription rate includes postage and packaging. If the magazine ordered changes frequency per annum, we will honour the number of issues paid for, not the term of the subscription. For full terms and conditions, visit magazinesdirect.com/terms. For enquiries please telephone: +44(0)330 333 1113 (open Monday-Friday, 8.30am-7pm, and Saturday, 10am-3pm UK time), or email: help@magazinesdirect.com. Calls to 0330 numbers will be charged at no more than a national landline call, and may be included in your phone provider's call bundle.

# EXCLUSIVE SUBSCRIBER CONTENT
# DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR
# SUBSCRIBER-ONLY COVERS
# SAVE UP TO 35% ON COVER PRICE

**OUR SIMPLE SIX-MONTH SUBSCRIPTION BREAKS UP THE ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION INTO TWO EASILY MANAGEABLE PAYMENTS OVER THE COURSE OF THE YEAR.**

## PRINT EDITION
**£22.99 EVERY SIX MONTHS**
Get 13 issues of *Total Film* in print over 12 months
**SAVE 35%**

**NEW!**
Full digital access to all prior and future issues when you subscribe to print.

## DIGITAL EDITION
**£18.49 EVERY SIX MONTHS**
Get 13 issues of *Total Film* in digital form over 12 months
**SAVE 35%**

# SUBSCRIBE TODAY AT
# MAGAZINESDIRECT.COM/TOF/C98K
## OR CALL 0330 333 1113 AND QUOTE C98K

SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

# THE BIG STILL

**Slimer, the Ecto-1 and the mini Stay Puft marshmallows make a welcome return to New York City in Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire. Director Gil Kenan and the cast of new and returning 'busters tell *Total Film* about the latest chilling sequel.**

WORDS **ADAM TANSWELL**

Ernie Hudson, Dan Aykroyd, Annie Potts and Bill Murray all reprise their roles from the original *Ghostbusters*

A frenetic chase scene follows the iconic Ecto-1 as it speeds around the mean streets of Manhattan. A gargantuan ghost – called the Hell's Kitchen Sewer Dragon – swoops through the sky as Phoebe Spengler (Mckenna Grace) swings into action from the back door of the souped-up Cadillac. Behind the steering wheel, Paul Rudd's Gary Grooberson delivers witty one-liners to the Spengler family, who audiences first met in 2021's *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*. This time around, the Spenglers and Groob are hustling in the hot seat for some seriously sub-zero supernatural encounters thanks to an evil force known as the Death Chill; their rural days in Oklahoma clearly a thing of the past.

*Total Film* has been invited into the edit bay of *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire* for a sneak peek at scenes from the spirited new sequel, presented by the movie's director and co-writer, Gil Kenan. The location for our interview is a small screening room inside the Capra building on the Sony Pictures Studio Lot in Culver City, California. There's an Ectomobile parked outside the building (on Ivan Reitman Way, no less), which makes this setting feel like a spiritual home of the franchise. It's the perfect place to discover more about the monster new movie.

> 'When they're together, you see that comic spark is still there'
>
> **GIL KENAN**

'Our story takes place within the confines of just a few days of the summer,' confirms Kenan, giving some background at the start of our interview. 'It's two years after the fateful events of Oklahoma and the Spengler family has moved to New York, where they are living in

Even the original Ecto-1 makes a comeback

The new generation of Ghostbusters suit up

SONY PICTURES ENTERTAINMENT



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

Phoebe Spengler confronts the Mini-Pufts once again

the firehouse. It's a totally new concept for Ghostbusters. We've never seen what it's like to live in a firehouse, where the work-life balance is a definite challenge.'

Back to the extended sequence we're previewing today, and the Ecto-1 hurtles around traffic as it tracks the fiendishly frosty new foe. Inside the vehicle, Callie (Carrie Coon) and Trevor Spengler (Finn Wolfhard) deploy a ghostbusting drone in an attempt to capture the cantankerous creature in the clouds above – but do they have what it takes? No spoilers here, but we're happy to report there are plenty of ingenious gadgets, engaging gags and ghastly new ghouls to entertain audiences as the family races around the city in their no-ghost flight suits. Yep, the Ghostbusters are back on the big screen – where bustin' makes everyone feel good.

## GHOST TOWN

If you live in Berkshire and you noticed 'something strange in your neighbourhood' – such as a Hollywood actor or two roaming around the local Tesco Express – your eyes weren't deceiving you. While the story of *Frozen Empire* is set in Manhattan, much of the movie was shot in Reading's Shinfield Studios. This is where principal photography began in March 2023, complete with four ghostbusting OGs: Dan Aykroyd (Raymond 'Ray' Stantz), Ernie Hudson (Winston Zeddemore), Bill Murray (Peter Venkman) and Annie Potts (Janine Melnitz).

Kenan has a huge grin on his face as he recalls watching the four actors work together on the UK set. 'As a lifelong fan of Ghostbusters, it's an incredibly unique and humbling experience to see these four characters standing shoulder-to-shoulder in front of you,' the British-born director says with a smile. 'Especially when they're standing in their flight suits with proton packs on their backs. When they're together, you see that comic spark and ferociousness to chase a joke is still there. You also see the deep love they have for their characters and each other. It's incredible.'

It's been 40 years since the first Ghostbusters movie was released, and appetite for the franchise continues to grow. That's one of the reasons why the writers decided to drop a number of seeds into the 2021 script about the OG Ghostbusters and what they've been up to since their antics in the 1989 sequel. It was all part of a bigger plan.

James Acaster is one of several comedians to join the franchise

## Q&A

### CARRIE COON

**Egon's daughter on embracing 'busting...**

**Where's Callie at the start of the movie?**
Callie and Gary are co-habiting in this dilapidated firehouse. They are play-acting as parents to teenage children. Can Gary and Callie make it? What kind of parents will they be? That's what they're figuring out.

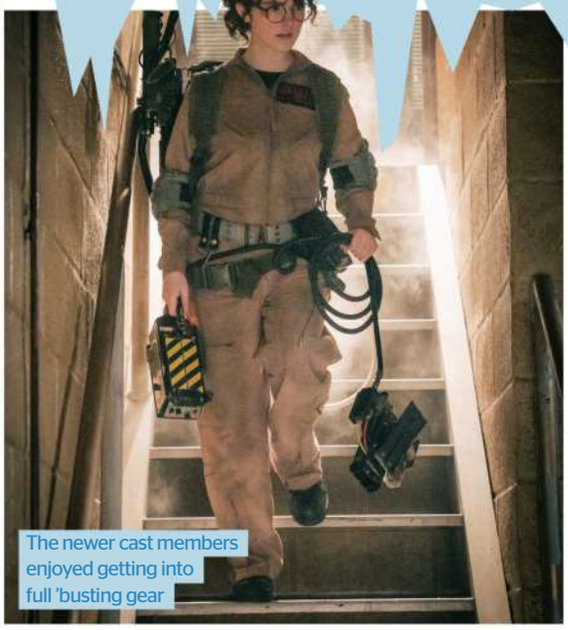
**How would you describe the firehouse set?**
I lived in Tribeca for a couple of years and I used to walk by that corner all the time, so to walk into the studio and see it built with enough space for a car to drive past... well, this business never ceases to amaze me. It was bizarre.

**Would it be a fun place to live?**
We all loved to go down the fire pole. To be honest, that's one of those actions you could charge people $10 to do.

**Is it a decent living space?**
The first time I walked into Callie's bedroom, her bed was made and it was very neat. I said, 'No, no, no. This should be much more hapless.' This woman does not have her act together.

**What's new in *Frozen Empire*?**
There are really high stakes and there is a real possibility of death. I think it's going to be scary.

**How terrifying is Garraka?**
They've designed a formidable foe who is very scary and very imposing. Having gone to school in Wisconsin, I know what it's like to have my nostrils and eyeballs freeze. It's a very unpleasant sensation. **AT**



The newer cast members enjoyed getting into full 'busting gear

For Kenan, this plan also involved a return to Manhattan so that the narrative could be set around a much-loved landmark – the firehouse.

An impressive replica of the iconic firehouse was meticulously reconstructed inside one of Shinfield Studios' mammoth soundstages, along with an entire block of the Tribeca street on which the original building stands. This was no mean feat for production designer Eve Stewart and her team of art directors, who travelled to New York to scan and measure the original from top to bottom. Kenan explains: 'They weren't just measuring the dimensions of the building, but also the way the textures of the asphalt give way to cobblestone right in front of the cement driveway. What they built was unbelievable.'

The life-size set certainly wowed the cast when they rocked up to work in Reading. 'It's pretty mind-blowing to me that you can shoot a big chunk of this movie in the UK and you would never know,' admits Paul Rudd, speaking on the phone to *Total Film* a week later. 'I lived around the corner from the original firehouse in New York, so I would see that building every single day. The craziest thing is seeing it rebuilt in Reading. It's nuts.'

'The attention to detail on the firehouse set was incredible,' adds Mckenna Grace, calling in from the States. 'I'd go over to Janine's desk to look through the drawers and I'd find something in every single one of them. I'd find mugshots of Ghostbusters. I'd find business cards with our names on them. It was crazy.'

With the Spengler family moving into the fan-favourite firehouse, audiences are able to see much more of the building's interior – including the characters' living quarters and some top-secret additions. Describing the different floors of the structure, Kenan teases: 'There's the basement, where the containment unit is. There's the ground floor, where Ecto-1 is parked. Then there's the first floor, where the kitchen is. That's followed by the second floor, where the bedrooms are found. Above that... well, you'll have to watch the movie to find out what's above that.'

## GOING GREEN

Alongside a number of practical sets, the filmmakers utilised green-screen space inside the vast studio campus to shoot some of the more complex VFX scenes, including the Hell's Kitchen Sewer Dragon sequence. 'That was the very first scene we filmed,' recalls

New big bad Garraka employs a 'Death Chill' to threaten the city

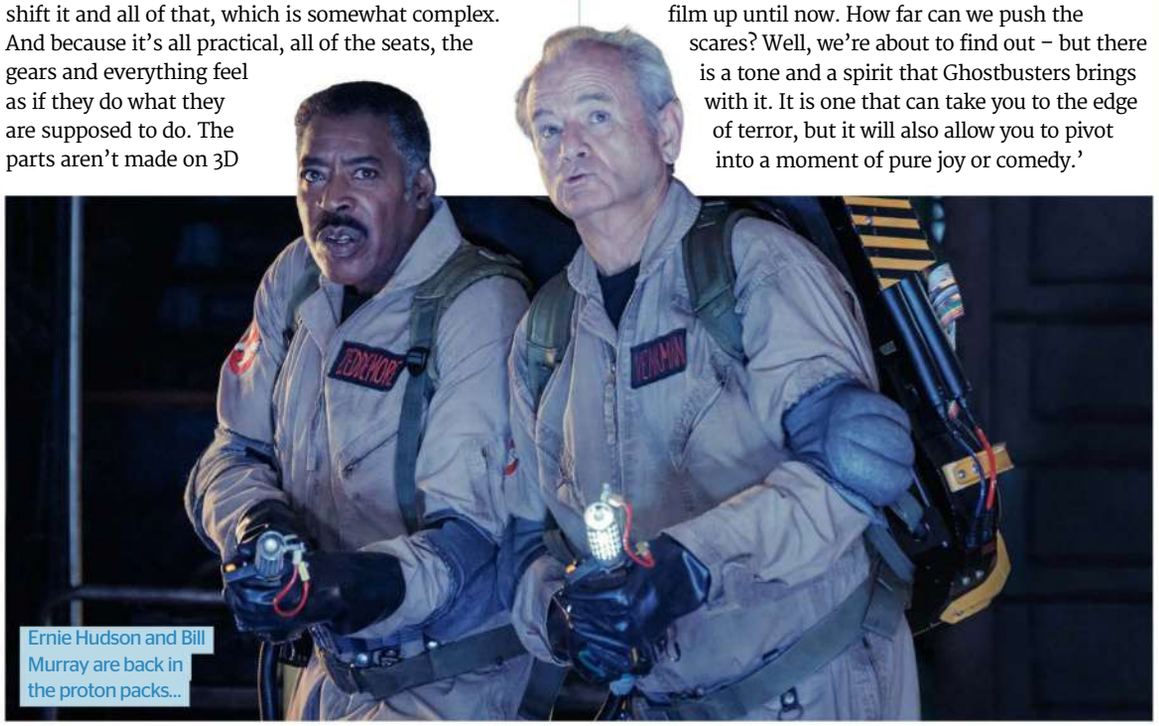
Rudd, who's having problems with his phone. The actor can hear an irritating echo every time he speaks, but he enthusiastically pushes through. 'Can you hear that? No? Man, it's weird. OK. Well, shooting that scene was really exciting. Firstly, because we were starting the movie and that's always an exciting feeling. But also, to be in a Ghostbusters flight suit and driving the Ecto-1 was a real kick. You know, there aren't many of those vehicles around. It isn't like they built them new for this movie. It's pretty crazy to think, "This is the Ecto-1 from the original *Ghostbusters* and I get to drive it."'

What else goes through the mind of an actor when they're sitting in the driver's seat of a classic car with a prominent place in Hollywood history? 'You're thinking, "Holy shit,"' chuckles Rudd, clearly enjoying the memory. 'You're thinking, "Wait, I'm actually driving the Ecto-1. This is the coolest thing ever." But then you're thinking, "Don't crash." You feel the weight of that thing, both literally and metaphorically, so it's exciting and interesting. It isn't like there's a key in the drive shaft. There are ways to turn on the car, shift it and all of that, which is somewhat complex. And because it's all practical, all of the seats, the gears and everything feel as if they do what they are supposed to do. The parts aren't made on 3D printers. They are heavy and bold. It feels like all of those cables, wires and vents actually do something.'

The thrill of driving around inside the Ectomobile was also not lost on Carrie Coon, although the actor admits it wasn't always a relaxing ride. 'More than once, we've been stuck inside the Ecto-1 when something would fall off or break,' she remembers. 'I know it's a very enviable position to be inside that car, but we do get beat up inside it. There are sharp edges. We all get bruises. It's not comfortable. You know, it's like driving an old car – but it's also very surreal. To be honest, I still can't wrap my head around the idea that I was inside the Ecto-1. Until I see the finished movie with my own eyes, it feels like I'm having an 80s dream.'

## SCARY TALE

When Gil Kenan and Jason Reitman started work on the script for *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire*, they decided to take the franchise in a chilling new direction. 'I set out to make a genuinely scary Ghostbusters film,' says Kenan. 'There are real life-or-death stakes in *Frozen Empire* and that's not something we've had to contend with in a Ghostbusters film up until now. How far can we push the scares? Well, we're about to find out – but there is a tone and a spirit that Ghostbusters brings with it. It is one that can take you to the edge of terror, but it will also allow you to pivot into a moment of pure joy or comedy.'



Ernie Hudson and Bill Murray are back in the proton packs...

## Q&A

### ERNIE HUDSON

**The OG 'buster answers the call**

**How does it feel to be back?**
It's incredible. Everywhere I go in the world, somebody will say, 'Who you gonna call?' I feel very, very blessed to be part of something as special as Ghostbusters. We've now brought a younger generation into the fold and it's cool to see the new possibilities.

**Where's Winston at the start of *Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire*?**
Winston is fascinated by this phenomenon. What's causing it? How do we tap into it? How can we use it to our benefit? He's putting his money into lots of research.

**How scary is the new movie?**
It's scary enough. The original movie's library scene was scary. It was a little bit freaky, a little bit weird and a little bit funny. This new movie is a little bit of all those things.

**What's it like to work alongside the other OGs?**
I've been involved with Ghostbusters for over half of my life, but I'm always grateful to see Billy, Danny and Annie Potts on set with me. I feel very grateful and very thankful that we're still involved with a franchise that's loved by so many people.

**Does the thrill of putting on a proton pack ever get old?**
No. If we were filming *Ghostbusters 16*, I think it might feel a little old – but for me, it's still fun. Maybe that's down to the fact that we waited so long before we revisited the franchise, but the fans have been very patient. It never gets old. **AT**

SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

Director Gil Kenan on set with Mckenna Grace and Logan Kim

While the Hell's Kitchen Sewer Dragon is a formidable foe in the film, Garraka is the name of the main villain in the movie. 'He's the character with the horns in the latest trailer,' explains Kenan. 'Then there's the Death Chill, which is the power that Garraka employs to stop whatever comes in his way. It begins with something we can all relate to. It's that feeling of cold that we experience when we're afraid of something. It's that chill that makes the hair stand up on the back of your neck. Garraka can employ that same thermodynamic property to destroy us, so it starts with something grounded and relatable – and it grows into something expansive and world-threatening.'

In the eyes of Ernie Hudson, the treacherous new villain is a welcome addition to the movie franchise. 'When I first read the script, I was relieved because this is a step in a bold new direction,' the original Ghostbusters actor explains to *TF*. 'We've all seen Gozer and the ghosts from the original movie before, but it's great to see Gil and Jason come up with a whole new chapter for *Frozen Empire*. I was very happy to see there's a way forward without having to try and redo something from the past.'

To counteract the terror of Garraka, it's no coincidence that three actors with a heavy background in comedy were added to the cast. Kumail Nanjiani, Patton Oswalt and British comedian James Acaster all have significant roles in *Frozen Empire* – and all three characters were written with the actors in mind. 'Ghostbusters is, was and always will be a comedy brand,' Kenan tells us. 'The first film was one of the funniest films of its time. That's due in no small part to the brilliance of the comic actors who were cast in the movie. In expanding this world, Jason and I knew from the initial germination of the writing phase that there was room for new comic voices.'

Dan Aykroyd returns as Ray, while Patton Oswalt joins the party

## Q&A

## PAUL RUDD

### The Marvel star on proton packs and KitKats

**What excites you the most about *Frozen Empire*?**
I'm excited to see the OGs in their ghostbusting suits. Honestly, it's the biggest thrill to be in the room when they're doing their thing.

**How heavy is a proton pack?**
Heavier than you think. It's not the most comfortable thing. They started to set up these stands so that we could rest the packs easily while we were standing around with them on between takes.

**What do you make of the movie's newcomers?**
Kumail, Patton and James are hilarious. They're all smart and funny comedians – and big Ghostbusters fans. They are also really great guys, which is nice because it's fun to hang out with nice, funny people.

**What's James Acaster like?**
James is a great comedian and a real foodie, as we all know from his podcast. I went to a couple of restaurants with James while we were shooting. The places he took me to were delicious.

**How was the on-set catering?**
It was really good. Every day, they set out a table filled with all kinds of delicious chocolates and biscuits. They were always a temptation.

**What's your favourite British chocolate bar?**
I've always loved a Crunchie and I'm a fan of the original KitKat. We have them here in the States, but they taste better there. It's the chocolate. **AT**

Well, it wouldn't be a Ghostbusters movie without Slimer...

'By adding these three actors, there's a real return to the original tone of *Ghostbusters*,' explains Carrie Coon. 'People forget the fact that the original movie was released before anyone was blending genres in the way that *Ghostbusters* blended genres. Annie Potts talks about reading the original script and thinking, "I've never read anything like this before." It was a comedy. It was sci-fi. It was an adventure story, but it was also irreverent and a little bit raunchy. Making sure there are comedians involved in the story reminds us of the tone we're trying to capture in this franchise. I think it's a real return to that root. Plus, it's also about passing the torch to these new people in the story.'

With talk of passing the torch forward, the future of the fiendish franchise becomes the next topic of conversation. Kenan and Reitman are executive producers of the upcoming Ghostbusters animated series on Netflix, but Sony has yet to reveal if any additional movies have been greenlit. Kenan is certainly open to more. 'Jason

> 'To be in a Ghostbusters flight suit and driving the Ecto-1 was a real kick'
> **PAUL RUDD**

and I really love Ghostbusters,' he enthuses. 'We love these characters and we would be really happy if audiences were down to keep going on adventures with them. If audiences feel this way, then we know what the next stories are going to be.'

Are the actors on board for more movies? 'Absolutely,' states Coon without a pause. 'There's something so thrilling about working on these movies, especially as a woman. We're not often asked to participate in the adventure or the physical elements of movies like this. We're often just on the sidelines, so to be thrown into the action has been a real thrill. On top of that… Well, it's already going to be in my obituary, so I might as well lean in.'

Mckenna Grace is equally enthusiastic. 'As heavy as those frickin' proton packs are, I would gladly put one on again. The proton packs weigh around 40 pounds, but I'm fine with that because it's been a dream come true to be part of this franchise. I love these films. I love getting to be a Ghostbuster. I mean, who are you gonna call? This guy! Me.'

**GHOSTBUSTERS: FROZEN EMPIRE**
**OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 22 MARCH.**

SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

# THE LONG GAME

AFTER DAVID BENIOFF AND D.B. WEISS ENDED *GAME OF THRONES*, THERE WAS ONLY ONE WAY TO GO: UP. AS THEY UNVEIL THE GENRE-SPLICING, CHINESE-PENNED SCI-FI 3 BODY PROBLEM, *TOTAL FILM* MEETS THE SHOWRUNNERS AND CAST TO TALK ABOUT THE MOST BONKERS, BRAZEN SERIES OF THE YEAR.

**WORDS JAMES MOTTRAM**

When HBO's wildly popular *Game of Thrones* concluded in 2019, it left a fantasy-shaped hole in many people's lives. But most of all, for the show's creators David Benioff and D.B. Weiss. 'We spent 13 wonderful years in the world of that show and wouldn't trade them for anything,' says Weiss, 52, speaking over Zoom from a rock-star looking room bedecked with electric guitars. 'But we really wanted to do something that felt different in many, many ways.'

Zine Tseng as the younger Ye Wenjie

Among other projects, they considered entering the Star Wars universe with *The First Jedi*, a story about how the Jedi Order came to be – until Lucasfilm nixed it. Yet sci-fi was to remain central to the show they settled on: *3 Body Problem*, a hugely ambitious, near-unclassifiable genre-hopping hybrid based on the Chinese trilogy *Remembrance of Earth's Past* by author Liu Cixin. It came via the suggestions of Netflix exec Peter Friedlander, who met with Weiss and Benioff over the summer of 2019 as the pair were inking a reported $200 million multi-year deal with the streamer.

By their own admission, neither was that familiar with Liu's work. 'I think we were both dimly aware that Barack Obama had blurbed the first book, which seemed unusual that he would blurb a Chinese science-fiction novel,' says a hoodie-sporting Benioff, 53. But the moment they read it, they were hooked, 'which', adds the showrunner, 'is a big part of the reason we ended up at Netflix.' Spreading out from the Chinese Cultural Revolution to the present day and beyond, it's an invasion story like no other. An alien race, facing its own annihilation, has set its sights on Earth. The twist? They won't arrive for 400 years.

'If it takes them 400 years to get here, that means that for a long time the story isn't nearly as much about them as it is about us and our reaction to them,' says Weiss. 'That I'd never really seen before. I don't think any of us had. I love a lot of those stories, they're really fun, but *War of the Worlds*… you're walking down a street in Boston and a UFO pops out… and then it's on. In *Signs*, they come from out of the sky, and then they're here. It's all about what do we do when they're here. This is more about us than it is about them. At least initially.'

Benedict Wong stars as Da Shi

Jess Hong plays Jin Cheng

Jovan Adepo as Saul Durand

Joining Weiss and Benioff in this creative hive was Alexander Woo, a former writer-producer on *True Blood*. Adapting Liu's physics-heavy trilogy – which begins with book one, *The Three-Body Problem* – was always going to be tough, he acknowledges. 'One of the things that makes it so challenging is that the timelines of the trilogy are pretty crazy. All three do start in the rough present day. And [the] second, third books certainly go far, far, far into the future. So for our show, it made a lot of sense to have characters who are contemporaneous with each other all be there in Season 1, because they all exist in the same time period.'

## RESEARCHERS, ASSEMBLE

Central to the eight-episode first season is a group of physicists who come together under the command of a British intelligence chief named Wade (Liam Cunningham, who played *Thrones*' Ser Davos Seaworth), as they brainstorm ways of defending Earth. Among them are Jin Cheng (Jess Hong), Saul Durand (Jovan Adepo), Auggie Salazar (Eiza González), Will Downing (Alex Sharp) and Jack Rooney (John Bradley), who has just sold his crisps-and-snack company for millions.

Producer/writer Alexander Woo on set



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

A group of young scientists are recruited to combat the existential threat

'WE'RE ALL INDIVIDUALS HAVING TO COME TOGETHER TO FACE THIS MASSIVE THREAT THAT WE COULD NEVER IMAGINE FACING'

JOVAN ADEPO

'Even though the majority of the cast are scientists, we are all not built in this cookie-cutter form of what a scientist is like, you know what I mean?' says Adepo, who previously featured in another doomed-humanity tale, HBO drama *The Leftovers*. 'We are all individuals, and we have our own backgrounds, our own personalities. And I think that you're dealing with people having to come out of themselves as individuals in their day-to-day lives, having to come together to face this massive threat that we could never imagine facing.'

While Adepo calls his character 'a regular guy [who] just happens to have a really, really extraordinary brain', he's not the only one. Talking up Jack Rooney, 'He's a working-class northern boy… like myself,' explains Bradley, 35, who previously played fan favourite Samwell Tarly in *Thrones*. 'He's come from a council estate. And now he's a physics graduate from Oxford University, super-intelligent, in an instinctive, streetwise way.' Now, unlike his academic friends, he's found entrepreneurial success. 'So he's living high on the hog. He's loving his life… as a super-rich man-about-town.'

Although Benioff and Weiss did take inspiration from a character found in the books, they also based Rooney around Bradley. Not least the fact the character is named after former Manchester United footballer Wayne Rooney – with Bradley an ardent fan of the club. 'John Bradley is one of the smartest people we've ever met,' says Weiss. 'Wherever his intelligence comes from, it's not books. I think the book that John has read the most by far would be Wayne Rooney's *My Decade in the Premier League*, which I think he's read 10 times. He would sometimes subject other actors on *Game of Thrones* to readings.'

Rather than make the Rooney character a Man U fan, however, the showrunners cheekily decided to make him a devotee of rival club, Manchester City. 'I really had to do a lot of research into what it's like to be that kind of scumbag!' chuckles Bradley. 'It doesn't come naturally to me, that kind of attitude.' Cruelly, Bradley was even made to drive around in a Rolls-Royce SUV, which was painted in Man City blue. Sadly, the scene got cut. 'I'm glad that a lot of my Man United-supporting pals won't get the chance to see it!' he adds, clearly relieved.

Bradley aside, *3 Body Problem* gave Benioff and Weiss the chance to reunite with several key *Thrones* alumni. Not just Liam Cunningham and Jonathan Pryce, who played the High Sparrow in *Thrones* and here is a cult leader trying to commune with the aliens. Behind the camera, *Thrones*' casting director Nina Gold, production designer Deborah Riley, cinematographer Jonathan Freeman and director Jeremy Podeswa, who helms the final two episodes here, all return. Newcomers, meanwhile, include Hong Kong director Derek Tsang (*Better Days*), who set the tone by calling the shots on the first two eps.

Eiza González as Auggie Salazar

## KEEPING IT UNREAL

With the first season largely set in the UK (with some scenes in China, Panama and the US), the show was primarily filmed in Britain – with Shepperton Studios acting as the base for all the green-screen work for its spectacular VR moments. As Rooney soon discovers, he has been left a headset by this advanced alien civilisation, which allows him and Jin into a fully immersive world set in Tudor England – as a way of communicating with the invading forces.

John Bradley as Jack Rooney, receiving his VR headset

Liam Cunningham as British intelligence chief, Wade

Anyone else who tries it on is met with a swift blow to the neck with a sword and the phrase 'You have not been invited' bumping them out of this all-too-real landscape.

It's in the spectacular third episode where huge swathes of VR appear, all brilliantly marshalled by Andrew Stanton (the former Pixar stalwart who directed *Finding Nemo* and *WALL·E*). 'He was the rare director who was not daunted by that," says Woo, who was instrumental in securing the sought-after Stanton. 'I was surprised [that we got him]. I mean, *Finding Nemo* was a movie that is going to be watched long after all of us are dead, as is *WALL·E*,' says Weiss. 'When he said he wanted to do the show, I was like, "Are you sure?" I just felt like he was just dropping a lottery ticket in our laps.'

Without spoiling, this episode also taps into Benioff's irrational *Thrones*-inspired fear of horses. 'By the time we got through the final season, I had grown terrified of horses. It was never a phobia I had in my childhood, but every time one of our actors was on one of those things, I was nervous,' he says. 'Honestly, by the end, I was just like, "I can't get near these things."' Which might explain one remarkable, gravity-defying VFX sequence, when things go haywire in VR land. 'The floating horse, which is shitting itself…' laughs Benioff. 'Hard to see. But if you frame through [the sequence] you'll see…'

**'SHOOTING IN THE UK… IT WAS A CHANCE TO GET ALL OUR FAVOURITE BRITISH COMEDIC ACTORS ON THE SHOW'**
**ALEXANDER WOO**

The episode also includes inspired cameos from ex-*League of Gentlemen* stars Mark Gatiss and Reece Shearsmith. 'One of the great opportunities of shooting in the UK… it was a chance to get all our favourite British comedic actors in the show,' says Woo, who also geeked out by casting *Taskmaster* favourite Phil Wang. And then there's the mighty Adrian Edmondson, famed for playing the punk Vyvyan in student comedy *The Young Ones*, who features here in one of the most menacing – and dramatic – roles of his career as a scheming tech boss.

'In college, we wore out our video tape of *The Young Ones*,' recalls Weiss, 'because we watched every episode until we couldn't really watch them any more, because they were too grainy. So to meet Ade and to see what Ade brought in terms of straightforward, subtle, menacing,

The scientists employ VR to travel through time and space

Weiss and Benioff on location

The series starts at the time of the Chinese Cultural Revolution



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

# VIRTUAL INSANITY The best on-screen VR

### TRON
**1982**

The granddaddy of all VR movies, *Tron* sees Jeff Bridges' software engineer Kevin Flynn sucked into a mainframe computer, where programs are living entities and the so-called Master Control Program is in charge. You can even jump on a Light Cycle for the deadliest racing game you'll ever play.

### THE MATRIX
**1999**

Mankind has been enslaved by machine-like sentinels, as Keanu Reeves' Neo and millions of others are left to slumber inside the Matrix, a shared simulated reality modelled on the world as it was in 1999. It's not all bad, though: you can get a pretty good VR steak there.

### EXISTENZ
**1999**

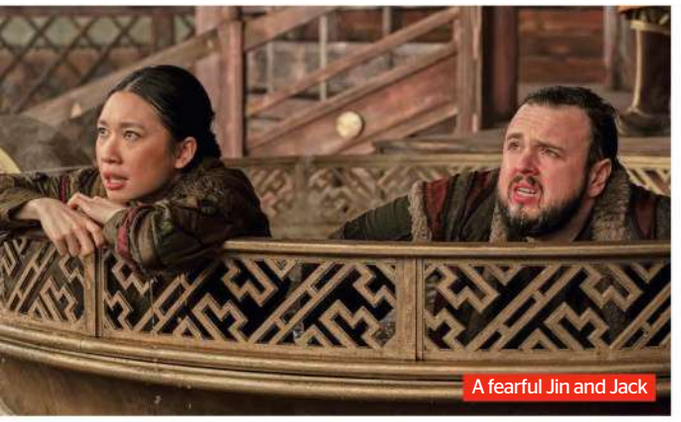
Jennifer Jason Leigh's game designer enters her own VR masterpiece in David Cronenberg's prophetic look at simulation gaming. Set in a world where the game is accessed by UmbiCords that attach to bio-ports in players' spines, it plays out like a deadly game of cat and mouse.

### READY PLAYER ONE
**2018**

Real life is drab and draining. So in Spielberg's sci-fi everyone plugs into OASIS, a VR world where people adopt avatars, break the speed limit and look cool in bars. No wonder they stick around. 'They stay because of all the things they can be,' says Tye Sheridan's DeLorean-driving Wade Watts.

### ALTERED CARBON
**2018-2020**

Another Netflix show, set in a world where consciousness can be transferred to different bodies. Those who are that way inclined can head to a VR café where they can play out any scenario they want – usually violent or sexually depraved acts. Torture is also on the menu. **JM**



A fearful Jin and Jack

dramatic acting… it was so hard to square with. I've logged many hours of Ade Edmondson viewing in my brain. And they had nothing to do with the excellent work that I was seeing on our set. They were of Vyvyan smashing his head through a wall!'

## HIGHER LEARNING

While Woo, Benioff and Weiss were getting their kicks from comedy, there was also serious work to be done. Keen to understand the physics behind the show, Adepo spoke to on-set consultants and even went to Oxford University to meet students of the discipline. 'The brainpower just in a small classroom is incredible,' he notes, admiringly. So did his understanding of this very taxing science improve at all? 'Absolutely not!' he laughs. 'I could probably guess in a multiple-choice quiz certain aspects of high-level physics. But I dare not disrespect the students who put countless hours in studying to get their doctorates.'

The big fear was always whether you'd need a degree to unpick *3 Body Problem*. 'It's not just sci-fi,' Adepo says. 'It's not just drama. There is comedy in the show. It's just complex storytelling.' Bradley remembers when the teaser dropped last summer. 'Mates were like, "I've never seen a trailer before where I know less about it now than I did before I saw the trailer." Because there are parts in space [and] parts that seemed to be in the contemporary world. There's 1960s China, there's Tudor England, there's Genghis Khan's Mongolian dynasty. And a large part of that is the virtual-reality element of it. It just kicks the doors of possibility wide open.'

As Woo notes: 'A lot of people did say, "Oh, I don't know what this is about, but I really want to see it," which was exactly the effect [we wanted].' Indeed, one of the real pleasures of the show is just how unlike anything else around it is. 'It was not immediately obvious how [the books] could be turned into a TV show,' admits Benioff. 'But we knew that it was different from anything else we'd encountered. Part of the attraction was like, "How the hell do we do this?" It was similar when we read [*Thrones* author] George R.R. Martin's books for the first time, just thinking, "These books are incredible. But is it possible to do this as a TV series? Is it too big, too sprawling, too expensive?"'

Ask for references and Benioff admits they watched Stanley Kubrick's landmark *2001: A Space Odyssey* 'repeatedly'. But there were other influential sci-fi texts, too. 'Danny Boyle did that movie *Sunshine*, which had moments of that awe-and-wonder feeling,' adds Weiss. 'It's not just about a monster chasing you and you need to get away. It's the feeling of wonder that comes with great science fiction.' He also cites Tarkovsky's *Solaris*. 'That's, in many ways, very different from this, but in terms of the feeling it gives you internally… for me that was something I would sometimes be thinking about with this.'

So are Benioff and Weiss expecting another *Thrones*-like phenomenon? 'I mean, the odds are it was a once-in-a-lifetime thing. It'd be insane to expect that again. And we didn't expect it the first time, to be honest,' shrugs Weiss. 'I think the hope for us, more than specific numbers or anything else, is that we're able to get to the end of the show. That we're able to tell the whole story… that means doing well enough that Netflix decides it's worth their time to keep paying for the show.'

Adepo concurs. 'I think that there's more story to be told,' he says. 'I'm curious to see how we continue to deal with this threat.' Unlike *Thrones*, which remains an ongoing literary series as Martin continues to chip away at sixth book *The Winds of Winter*, Liu's story has a definite endgame. 'The ending did influence [us] a lot,' says Woo. 'It was so effective.' As you can imagine – that alien threat will eventually materialise. Or to use a *Thrones* analogy: winter is coming. Weiss grins. 'They're faster than winter.'

Saul and Auggie await the existential threat

NETFLIX

**3 BODY PROBLEM STREAMS ON NETFLIX FROM 21 MARCH.**

# NUKE WORLD ORDER

**IN VIDEO-GAME ADAPTATION FALLOUT, THE END OF THE WORLD IS ONLY THE START OF THE FUN. AS THE GONZO POST-APOCALYPTIC SERIES MAKES THE LEAP TO LIVE ACTION, *TOTAL FILM* STRAPS ON A PIP-BOY AND VENTURES INTO THE WASTELAND WITH THE CAST AND CREATORS OF THE NEXT IRRADIATED-WATER-COOLER SHOW.**

**WORDS JORDAN FARLEY**

There is a moment near the beginning of *Fallout 3* – the landmark 2008 action role-playing game from Bethesda Games Studios – that is imprinted on anyone who experienced it at the time. In it, the player-created main character opens the exit to the subterranean vault they've called home for 19 years, and steps into the blinding light of the Wasteland for the first time, a literal world of potential stretching as far as the eye can see.

'I was, right out of the gate, blown away,' says Jonathan Nolan, the co-creator of HBO's *Westworld* and co-writer of *The Dark Knight*, *The Dark Knight Rises*, *The Prestige* and *Interstellar*, alongside big brother Chris. During a conversation with *Total Film* in early February, Nolan is reminiscing about 'looking for a new distraction' in late 2008, months after *The Dark Knight* hit cinemas, and being drawn to a copy of hot new thing *Fallout 3*.

'I was obsessed with the game, and obsessed with the world of it,' a visibly animated Nolan says over Zoom. 'The ambition of it, and the mythology of it, and the sophistication of the world, and the gravitas of it. What really got to me, though [was] the weirdness of it, and the gonzo, satirical, impossible-to-place tone of this thing. You very seldom see anything like this.'

Contradiction is at the heart of *Fallout*. Take that first in-game glimpse of the open world. The paradox of this moment is that, for all the freedom it promises, everything in front of you is extremely dead. The toxic landscape is dotted with the decrepit relics of a once-thriving civilisation, some two centuries after a nuclear judgement day has driven the haves underground and left the have-nots to fend for themselves on the surface with irradiated cockroaches the size of house cats and even more monstrous mutants.

Life is as grim as it gets in the Wasteland, yet the tone of *Fallout* is anything but. Nolan describes the series as 'closer to comedy' than anything he and Lisa Joy have made to date. Leaning into *Fallout*'s contradictions, Nolan and Joy, who were still working on *Westworld* while initially developing *Fallout* in 2019, made the unusual decision to hire a pair of showrunners with wildly divergent backgrounds: Geneva Robertson-Dworet (*Captain Marvel*, *Tomb Raider*) and Graham Wagner (*Silicon Valley*, *The Office*).

'Geneva comes from the comic-book world like me, whereas Graham comes from comedy,' Nolan points out. 'That was kind of the approach – a little bit of



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

Aaron Moten and Ella Purnell play young residents of the nuclear Wasteland

David Lean, and a little bit of straight comedy,' he nods. Much of *Fallout*'s humour comes from its deeply embedded critique of consumer corporatism. The Wasteland is littered with the retro-futuristic detritus of mega-corporations like Vault-Tec, and its grinning mascot Vault Boy, who is often glimpsed giving a big, incongruous thumbs-up.

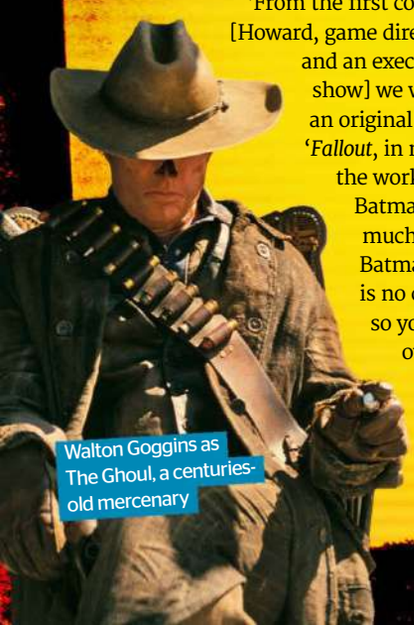
'There's all this branded stuff,' Robertson-Dworet says. 'And it seems to imply that whatever brought the world to the end was the hyper-corporatisation of that pre-war society.' 'It's given us a fair bit of joy to be able to do that on Amazon Prime Video,' adds Wagner, with a chuckle. 'That is the paradox of America.'

## GAME CHANGER

*Fallout* has arrived at a fascinating moment for video-game adaptations. Once the subject of a decades-long 'curse', preconceptions that game-based movies and TV shows are likely to fail were well and truly upended by HBO's acclaimed adaptation of *The Last of Us* a year ago. 'Now there's an expectation of: "No, they can actually be great. I watched some good ones,"' says Wagner with a smile. 'In a perverse way, I wish there was more snobbery so that we could have been the first!'

Both may be violent stories set in a post-apocalyptic America, featuring zombie-adjacent creatures, but the comparisons between *TLOU* and *Fallout* end there. Most significantly, while the former faithfully (some might say slavishly) replicates the game's narrative on screen, *Fallout* is telling an original story in a new location for the series – Los Angeles – but all set in the same canonical American Wasteland as the games.

'From the first conversation with Todd [Howard, game director of *Fallout 3* & *4*, and an executive producer on the show] we were most excited about an original story,' says Nolan. '*Fallout*, in my career, is closest to the work we did in adapting Batman, where there's so much storytelling in the Batman universe that there is no canonical version of it, so you're free to invent your own. Each of the [*Fallout*] games is a discrete story – different city, distinct protagonist – within the same mythology. Our series sits in relation to the games as the games sit in relation to each other. It's almost like we're *Fallout 5*. I don't want to sound presumptuous, but it's just a non-interactive version of it, right?'



Walton Goggins as The Ghoul, a centuries-old mercenary

Ella Purnell's Lucy quickly learns that life on the surface isn't everything she had believed

**'THE APPROACH [WAS] A LITTLE BIT OF DAVID LEAN, AND A LITTLE BIT OF STRAIGHT COMEDY'**

**JONATHAN NOLAN**

With a typical playthrough of *Fallout 3* or its 2015 sequel, *Fallout 4*, taking upwards of 100 hours, and players afforded the freedom to engage with as little or as much of the world and its wacky inhabitants as they want, the challenge was 'how do we evoke all the great parts of *Fallout* efficiently, and in a way that is meaningful to us?' according to Wagner. 'By telling an original story, we felt like we could welcome people who weren't familiar with the games to the key tenets of a *Fallout* storyline,' adds Robertson-Dworet. 'Which are: a Vault-dweller going to the surface for the first time, and having their morality challenged; exploring the Power Armour through the Brotherhood of Steel; and The Ghouls, who are the most

JOJO WHILDEN/PRIME VIDEO ©AMAZON CONTENT SERVICES LLC

Jonathan Nolan directed the first three episodes of the series

benighted of all the people on the surface. So we wanted to look out for them, and, in fact, put our favourite actor of all time, Walton Goggins, into that role.'

## GHOUL & THE GANG

Goggins doesn't have just a role; in fact, he has two. We first meet him as Cooper Howard – a down-on-his-luck former western star, who is the entertainment at a kids' party on the day the nukes detonate and change the world of *Fallout* forever. Howard features throughout the show in flashbacks that will expand on how, 219 years later, he has become The Ghoul – a necrotic, gunslinging mercenary whose life has been indefinitely prolonged by exposure to radiation and a cocktail of chemicals that keep him from turning feral.

A standout supporting player in *The Shield*, *Justified* and two Tarantino westerns, but with criminally few leading roles to his name, Goggins admits to having no idea

Michael Emerson (centre) is scientist Wilzig, being tracked by The Ghoul

The Ghoul started out as a western actor, before radiation deformed his body and prolonged his life

what *Fallout* was initially. 'All I needed to know was that Jonathan and Lisa were behind it,' he nods. 'Then they started describing the character. And I was like, "Really? So I don't have any hair? I've been walking in a Wasteland for 200 years? OK!"'

In order to portray The Ghoul, Goggins spent an hour and 45 minutes having a deceptively thin prosthetic headpiece applied every morning, undergoing a radical transformation into a character he describes as 'the good, the bad and the ugly' rolled into one. 'What we kept coming back to was that we wanted the audience to not be repulsed by the visual of The Ghoul; but, rather, to lean into it, and to look at his face, and to become obsessed with it,' Goggins says. 'And to make him sexy, on some level. To make him irresistible.'

Certainly, The Ghoul has a swagger and a confidence in his capabilities that make him cool, calm and collected, even when drastically outnumbered in a gunfight. Goggins turned to numerous iconic western stars for inspiration: Clint Eastwood, Lee Van Cleef, James Coburn, Alan Ladd, James Arness, Paul Newman, but in particular, 'I really, really watched, over and over again, Henry Fonda in *Once upon a Time in the West*, and the way in which his energy comes into the room before he does. The way he moves with very little effort, and he never really speaks above a whisper.'

**'WE'VE BARELY SCRATCHED THE SURFACE OF THE FALLOUT UNIVERSE'**

**GRAHAM WAGNER**

The Ghoul is hired to track down Wilzig (Michael Emerson), a scientist with a valuable secret in his head, causing him to cross paths with Ella Purnell's former Vault-dweller Lucy and Aaron Moten's Brotherhood of Steel squire Maximus, who make up the cast's interconnected core trio.

When we meet Lucy, a life-long resident of Vault 33, her father, Hank (Kyle MacLachlan) has arranged for her to be married to a suitor from Vault 32. Her destiny as a wife and mother is about to unfold exactly as she's always been told it will.

'Lucy is highly trained and smart, and is this A1 put-together type,' Purnell says. 'She truly is a good person, and believes in the Golden Rule, and that her children's children will go to the surface one day, and rebuild America. She believes in doing her duty, and procreating, and creating the future. And then through a series of unfortunate events, she ends up going to the surface and leaving the Vault, and finding that may not be entirely true.'

On the surface, Lucy quickly learns that morality is a privilege. 'Lucy is able to be this noble person back in her Vault, because she's never wanted for anything,' Robertson-Dworet says, 'And as soon as she's on the surface, every decision becomes a lot harder.' That's certainly true for Maximus, a member of the

The Brotherhood of Steel seeks out pre-war technology



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

Knights of the Brotherhood of Steel wear heavy-duty suits of Power Armour

quasi-religious Brotherhood of Steel – a technocratic paramilitary order whose primary aim is to locate, preserve and regulate pre-war technology. This is achieved through the use of Power Armour (see boxout, right), metal suits that turn Brotherhood Knights into walking tanks. 'They usually use violent means in order to achieve their goals,' says soft-spoken Moten. 'Maximus enters as a young initiate, and is hoping to rise in the ranks of the Brotherhood.'

Max is a squire, tasked with carrying his Knight's oversized bag into battle and, er, polishing his codpiece. But it's all in aid of something greater than himself, Max dedicating his life to the order after being saved by the Brotherhood as a child. 'He wants to be a hero,' Wagner says. 'He wants to be chivalrous. But he finds out that the Brotherhood is not quite what it seems. And so the question is: how can he actually live up to his ideals if the institution that he's part of is so problematic?'

## ARMOUR WARS

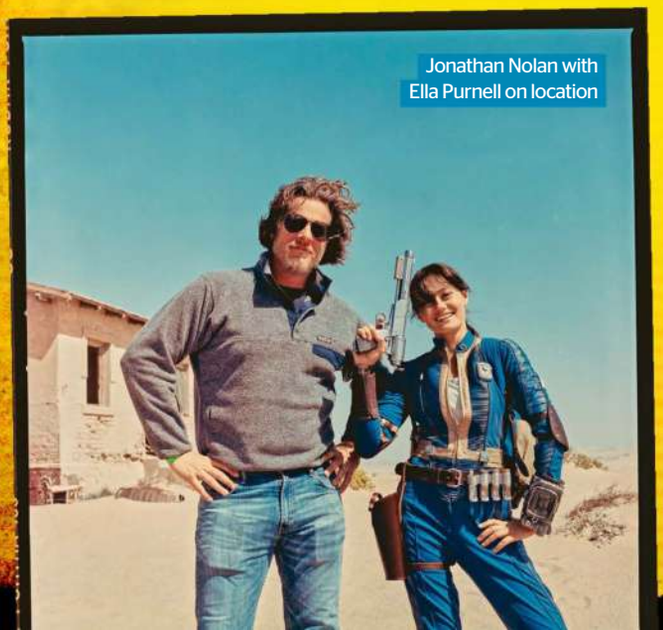
Incredibly, the Brotherhood's Power Armour was a practical costume, worn by stunt performer Adam Shippey. 'I've learned this with my brother, and with all the projects that we've worked on over the years – it's always better if you can make it real,' notes Nolan, who currently has a suit of Power Armour sitting in his garage. 'We stole a trick from the original *Alien*. The Xenomorph [costume] was built around one terrifically talented performer, who had a very unique build, which allowed them to sculpt the suit in such a way that it doesn't feel like there's a person there. Even then, I still imagined that we would have to use a bit of trickery and replace the suit with CG in a lot of places, but 99% of what you're seeing is Adam walking around in that suit.'

For the cast, the suit was a special effect whose impact never waned. 'It's one of those things where you needed someone to tell you to close your mouth,' says Moten. 'You're just gaping at this thing. And the way that you see people behave – whether it's background actors or our crew – everyone needs to move out of the way.'

'I remember there was one point where he took a couple of fast steps towards me,' adds Purnell. 'I backed up off my mark and was completely out of focus, because that's your gut reaction to this robot transformer-looking dude who's humungous.'

Nolan himself directed the first three episodes, shooting primarily on location on the Skeleton Coast of Namibia and the Western Salt Lakes of Utah to capture a sense of the games' 'beauty and scope', while staying uncompromisingly true to the series' outrageously OTT violence ('It's definitely a hallmark of the game that we knew we had to translate into the series'). He also thought deeply about how to replicate the experience of playing the game in a passive medium. 'The way in which you interact with these games, there's as much cultural anthropology as there is violence,' he explains. 'You're sifting through the leavings of a world that has been destroyed. To take that freedom and eliminate it as a filmmaker is intimidating. You're taking away interactivity, and you're replacing it with intentionality, which is exciting. I think that's why there's a place for adapting video games.'

Certainly, everyone involved is excited enough by what they've made that no one is ruling out a return to the Wasteland. 'It's an uncertain time in television. So the art form of season finales has become: provide enough closure, but leave the door open for more,' Wagner admits. 'But we feel we've barely scratched the surface of the *Fallout* universe. We literally have documents and documents of stuff that we're, in success, eager to dig into. Our fingers are crossed that we're going to get the opportunity to do all that stuff.'



Jonathan Nolan with Ella Purnell on location

**FALLOUT STREAMS ON PRIME VIDEO FROM 12 APRIL.**

## SUIT CASE

### How *Fallout*'s practical Power Armour was made.

'The first meeting was so exciting,' says costume designer Amy Westcott. 'I was like, "This is great! This is great!" And then I started thinking, "Oh my God, this is petrifying!" The Power Armour was a collaboration with props, the art department, and then they made them out in LA. These phenomenal makers – Legacy – made all the pieces. We made sure that the performer wasn't going to die underneath them [in the heat]. It was a lot of collaboration in getting them on, also just so that the actors and the stunt players would actually be able to work in them. And there were under-layers that you had to see, and that had to make sense for the characters. The Brotherhood was so massive and epic that it was a lot of crossover with us and the art department and props to make that whole group. That whole army, I should say. And, for me, the chance to get to build a world like this is so rare. Everything was not only made, but completely altered and touched and aged and distressed. God, the scale of it was just huge. It was a great experience that is super rare.' JF

# AMERICAN FICTION



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

# RIGAID GLAS

After a scorching debut with *Saint Maud*, filmmaker Rose Glass returns with a horny, brawny, magical-realist tale of romance, regret and 'roids with ***Love Lies Bleeding***. She and her cast tell *Total Film* about making a 'strong woman' story with a twist...

**WORDS**
**JANE CROWTHER**

Katy O'Brian as Jackie and Kristen Stewart as Lou

Kristen Stewart is telling *Total Film* about the appeal of her new movie, *Love Lies Bleeding*, and her description doesn't pull any punches. 'There was something so nice about the nightmare fantasy of, you know, throat-fucking your evil dad with your girlfriend, and running off into the clouds,' chuckles Stewart over Zoom from her LA home as her dog, Cole, barks up a storm. It's days after the first of two films starring the actor has bowed at the 2024 Sundance Film Festival and Stewart, back in LA to shoot the cover of *Rolling Stone*, is trying to describe the allure of Rose Glass' heightened-reality crime thriller; a film that promises to make audiences blanch as much as Maud's thumb tacks in shoes. It's a tale that includes bug eating, fingering, poo fishing, monstrous evolution and a luridly violent scene that is literally jaw-dropping. 'She creates a vibe, doesn't she?' Stewart asks with admiration. 'She really does know how to build something – an entire world to immerse yourself in.'

Certainly, Glass made windswept Scarborough a creepy, foreboding location for a cautionary narrative of frenzy, infatuation and the fearsome power of driven women in *Saint Maud*. Stewart saw the 2020 lockdown hit and knew she wanted to work with its creator. 'We've really just started to allow women to make films in the scheme of things, if you really zoom out. We're not encouraged to make icky things. It's like, everyone needs to fill their marginal-content quota with affirmations or something. Rose definitely didn't feel inclined to be affected by that pressure. It was almost like it pushed her in a different and new direction. I was like, "Fuck, this person has got it."'

British director Glass is too humble to name-drop the numerous stars, directors and producers who reached out to her in the wake of her fiery calling card ('I had some very surreal Zooms – "Oh, this very famous person is on my laptop"') but she was keen to try a new process with her second film.

'I took the decision to take [the success of *Saint Maud*] as a liberating thing and a springboard to leap wholeheartedly and confidently into something and not think too much about it, because otherwise probably that's when the terror sinks in,' Glass says, now sporting cropped hair that makes her look (perhaps fittingly) like Mia Farrow in *Rosemary's Baby*. 'Writing *Saint Maud* by myself was a quite an isolating, stressful experience. As much as I'm happy with how it turned out, I think going into this next one, I was maybe nervous about getting back into that again. So I knew I wanted to co-write, and wanted to have fun doing it.'

> 'I KNEW I WANTED THE TONE TO BE QUITE PULPY, DARKLY COMIC AND VIOLENT'
> ROSE GLASS

Teaming up with writer-director Weronika Tofilska, whom she went to a film school with, Glass began to explore the story of an 80s female bodybuilder who might spin out of control as she prepped for competition. 'I went to [Tofilska] with a really embryonic version of what then became *Love Lies Bleeding*, and we just spent several months locked up in a room together, brainstorming, mapping out the story, and just seeing where it went – trying to make each other laugh and surprise each other. I knew what I wanted the tone to be, and the world, which was something quite pulpy, darkly comic and violent. People behaving badly and making terrible life decisions. A romance that sort of goes spectacularly wrong – or right, depending on how you look at it.'

## FLEX AND VIOLENCE

That romance, then, is the instant attraction that ignites between quiet gym manager Lou (Stewart) and muscle-bulging drifter Jackie (Katy O'Brian) in a dusty 80s Albuquerque crossroads town. Lou, tamped down by family trauma (dad played by Ed Harris, sis by Jena Malone, rat-tailed brother-in-law by Dave Franco) and fishing turds out of the abused gym loos, experiences love at first sight when confident, sexy Jackie prowls into the weights area. Jackie is on her way to hoped-for bodybuilding stardom in Vegas and will do anything to transform, even if that means losing her head. And though the women get hot and heavy immediately, their burgeoning love is threatened by the local mob and a crime of passion. There are guns, steroids, rock canyons and a lot of cleaning bleach involved…

'I liked exploring the qualities that somebody who does bodybuilding would have to possess, and the different ways they had the potential to be misguided or manipulated or abused by other people in their life – Jackie's got all this strength, energy and drive,' says Glass. 'There are parallels between Jackie's character and Maud. They're both trying to transform themselves, and arguably not in the most responsible ways.'

Anna Baryshnikov stars as Daisy

LIONSGATE/A24



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

Ed Harris stars as Lou's father, Lou Sr

No spoilers here, but let's just say that Jackie hulks out in prep for her spotlight in Las Vegas… And throughout the writing process, Glass had one actor in mind to embody skittish Lou. 'Kristen was the dream casting for that role, while the script was still being written, and before we had financiers on board. Obviously, you're going through the exercise of imagining, "If she says no, who would we go for?" I was very nervous and I was very glad that she said yes, because I'm not sure what we would have done otherwise.'

The concept intrigued Stewart. 'When [Glass] told me the idea for her follow-up film, I was really scared to touch it,' the actor admits. 'I didn't want to let her down.

'She told me that she had been feeling the effects of all the many conversations that happened in the wake of such an incredible first film. She was like, "Yeah, everyone's like, 'Make a movie about a strong woman, a strong lady. Blah blah blah blah.' So I wrote a movie about a *really* strong lady." I just thought it was kind of petulant and hilarious and exactly what I wanted to do even before I read the script. And when I read it, I was so impressed. It's just so many different things that don't normally go together. I mean, technically, on paper, it's a crime thriller. She posits life and violence, but small violences – the little things that make Lou hardened. I loved the movie because I loved Lou so much, and I really vouched for her, and I really wanted her to be a good guy – but things just aren't that simple.'

**'GETTING TO WORK WITH SOMEONE WHO IS ALSO QUEER, WHO DOESN'T FIND THE IDEA OF BEING WITH A WOMAN DISGUSTING, WAS A RELIEF'**
**KATY O'BRIAN**

Director Rose Glass on set

Dave Franco plays Lou's brother-in-law, J.J.

With Lou taken care of, Glass had to find her Jackie, a task she initially thought would be a 'discovery' role for an untested athlete. 'That's quite difficult, it turns out,' the writer-director laughs. 'We saw a lot of tapes. There's obviously a little bit of pressure at times to go for a more famous actor, and get them to transform and get into shape. It would take months and months, which we didn't have, and then you start having really weird conversations about: "Maybe body doubles and CGI?" Then quite close to the beginning of production we got one of Katy's tapes. And it was just like, "Thank God. I think we've found her."'

O'Brian had an athletic and martial-arts background but had been acting in projects such as *The Mandalorian* and *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*. She recognised Jackie immediately: 'I just knew that it was about a queer bodybuilder. I was like, "Well, I've done bodybuilding competitions. I know that. She's from the Midwest. I'm from the Midwest. And we're both queer. So, cool." I fell in love with it right away, and I was like, "I have to get this part." I thought I have to do it even more, because I have to A) show people that I'm a serious actor, but B) this is the kind of art that I've wanted to make for so long and have not had the opportunities to do.'

She aced numerous auditions and a key chemistry read with Stewart, booking the role only weeks before production. Though it shouldn't be noteworthy, it meant that a queer story would be told by queer actors. 'The authenticity is going to be there when you've both had those experiences,' O'Brian nods over Zoom, her wife moving around their house in the background. 'I've worked with a girl who was straight and we were supposed to do a kissing scene. She was so thoroughly uncomfortable with the concept, or the idea, of touching me that it made me feel gross. So getting to work with someone who's also queer, who doesn't find the idea of being with a woman disgusting, it was a relief. And you have an unspoken understanding of what this is like. But I love that this isn't a story about us coming out. It's not a story where she's with a man, and I take her away. It's a story about two women who fall in love, and that's it.'

Casting Stewart and O'Brian also allowed the actors to subvert their own on-screen personas, according to O'Brian. 'Kristen's gotten to play these really typically feminine characters. And with Lou, she's more macho. She's playing it tough, but is also really awkward and quirky. And I – who always has to play these military characters – get to play this nomad who comes out of nowhere. She's sexy and she knows it – I never get to do that. So that was a lot of fun, because we were actually seeing parts of ourselves that people don't generally cast us for.'

With only two weeks to get in shape before principle photography, O'Brian hit the gym with a trainer ('My strength training was very film-focused, concentrating on where the camera catches light – so a lot of upper-pectoral muscle, a lot of abs'), threw herself into

Lou and Jackie's emotional connection comes under threat

embodying a warrior in 80s short shorts and shell suits ('I'm literally wearing one of Jackie's bras right now, my wife has a jacket – I think I took half the wardrobe') and watched Glass' list of reference films, which included *Crash*, *Saturday Night Fever*, *Showgirls*, *The Night Porter* and *A Snake of June*.

Stewart collaborated with Glass and costume designer Olga Mill to create a skeevy-sexy look for Lou – all oversized T-shirts, mullet hair and sneakers. 'We started off thinking that Lou would be in boots and maybe a leather belt,' Stewart says. 'I was like, "Lou's a teenie guy. Lou's a soft-shoe guy." You can tell [Mill] the tiniest little things that maybe don't even have detail, and she's able to interpret it. And something about her colour choices… It's so "come in for milk and cookies, but then get face-fucked…"' she laughs.

Together, the trifecta of Glass, Stewart and O'Brian created a realistic romance with one foot firmly in heightened reality. '[Glass is] willing to use her script as a diving board. She was sculpting a feeling, a sort of energy and momentum,' recalls Stewart. 'Some directors are like surgeons and some are a little more ephemeral. Rose is definitely able to modulate in real time. You're not always aware of how that's going to end up. I just felt like such a partner – anything she needed, I just wanted to hand it to her. I didn't need to always know what was going on, because I genuinely trusted her implicitly.'

**'IT'S NOT THAT GRAPHIC… IT'S JUST THAT WHEN YOU TALK ABOUT A WOMAN'S BODY, PEOPLE START TO SQUIRM'**
**KRISTEN STEWART**

The pair become entangled in Lou Sr's criminal dealings



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

# STRONG FEMALE CHARACTERS

## Five deliciously 'monstrous' girlfriends

### MONSTERS VS ALIENS

Susan is a sweet girl until a meteor hits her on her wedding day, then turns her the size of a skyscraper. You're literally something on the bottom of her shoe.

### MY SUPER EX-GIRLFRIEND

G-Girl has superpowers that make her a great mate, until she's dumped by her feckless boyfriend – a powerful, vengeful former flame. Don't piss off a supe.

### WANDAVISION

Wanda is a model wife to Vision, until she recalls the real reason for her creating their world. Then all hell breaks loose. Well, what is grief if not love persevering?

### ATTACK OF THE 50 FOOT WOMAN

Wealthy socialite grows gargantuan and goes after her philandering, murderous ex-hubby for revenge. You do you, Nancy. And in a makeshift bikini bedsheet.

### LET THE RIGHT ONE IN

Pre-teen first love is cute, right? Holding hands, chatting by the swings. Ripping off hands, sucking blood, swinging from the rafters... **JC**

That trust was implicit in scenes of sex and violence. In one moment, a character is brutalised in a horribly funny way, gore (and teeth) flying – which left Sundance audiences gasping. The same could be said of hot, horny scenes of oral sex, where Lou asks Jackie to show her how she masturbates. 'I wanted the film to be really pulpy, melodramatic, visceral and there would probably be a lot of sex and violence in it,' says Glass. 'But, at the same time, I basically wanted to make the most fun film that I could. It's all done with a pretty light touch. And the world that the film takes place in, it's got a foot in reality but it's definitely got a foot up in the clouds somewhere else. It sort of means that you're able to lean into the more operatic qualities of gruesome, juicy violence, which in filmmaking is just a lot of fun. Subtlety is not the quality at the forefront of many things in the film.'

## WHAM, BAM, THANK YOU, MA'AMS

Though Stewart had been quoted during Sundance saying that the sauce in the movie might shock some, she's keen to point out that she doesn't think it's actually shocking. 'In print, that looks so different, because I was laughing when I said that. It will shock the pearl-clutchers. It's not that graphic. It's just that when you talk about a woman's body, when you start talking about the orifice, people start squirming. [The sex scenes are done] in a really good, tasty way. You don't see anything. I think you see [O'Brian's] tits once. You see mine for a split-second. But I think it's the verbiage. We talk about each other. We actually acknowledge what's happening, versus burying a head under a bustle.'

The whole experience impressed Stewart, not least working with O'Brian, a relative newbie compared with her own two-decade career. 'Something Katy brought that wasn't necessarily in the script was a deep sweetness, and it makes it fucking weird. I was impressed with her gall. Because when I first started, I was a kid. I was malleable. She's fully formed. She's a fucking grown-up and that can be so much scarier, to trust it all at that age, when you aren't used to it. I think she killed it.' Glass agrees, thrilled with the way the two women crafted a cinematic relationship that wrong-foots audiences and each other. But amid the many takeaways on offer (guilt, trauma, ambition, steroid abuse, daddy issues, breaking bad habits), she's reluctant to tag what the overriding theme of the piece truly is. 'I don't want to put anything into people's heads. If nothing else, it's about how difficult it is to quit smoking,' she smiles.

For O'Brian, the movie explores the beauty of life glinting in the filth. 'The film is surrounding us with disgusting situations, and the only thing that really comes in as beautiful is our [characters'] love, or how we're looking at each other. We're in this shithole and we're looking at each other. That's what's good about it.'

Stewart sighs as she tries to parse her thoughts. 'I think it's about the stories we tell ourselves to get us through. None of them are true and all of them are true – and everyone is having a different experience. The thing that drives it usually is a beating heart. That can lead you to very dangerous and very beautiful and stunning places…'

**'THE WORLD IT TAKES PLACE IN... IT'S GOT A FOOT IN REALITY, BUT IT'S DEFINITELY GOT A FOOT UP IN THE CLOUDS SOMEWHERE ELSE'**
**ROSE GLASS**

**LOVE LIES BLEEDING OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 3 MAY.**

**INTERVIEW** MATT MAYTUM

# ‘I THINK I STILL DO FEEL LIKE AN OUTSIDER, TO BE HONEST’

# JACK O’CONNELL

Since finding fame as one of *Skins*’ breakout graduates, Jack O’Connell has been renowned for bringing a raw intensity to his roles. Next up, he’s channelling that charisma in Amy Winehouse biopic *Back to Black*, playing the legendary singer’s troubled partner Blake Fielder-Civil. ‘I don’t think you stop learning,’ he tells *Total Film*. ‘New challenges are always welcome.’

**PORTRAITS** RACHELL SMITH

CAMERA PRESS/RACHELL SMITH



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

When *Total Film* catches up with Jack O'Connell in February, he's on an uncharacteristically chilled break. 'I'm just in Italy, in the mountains,' he explains. 'Just frolicking around in the snow.' Not exactly what you expect if you're familiar with his on-screen work, which frequently has a ferocious edge.

After doing classic Brit TV staples (*The Bill*, *Holby City*), O'Connell showed early promise in the likes of *This Is England* and *Eden Lake*. Born in Derbyshire in 1990 to an Irish father and English mother, O'Connell almost pursued a career in football before he found drama, his working-class roots making him something of a rarity in the British acting scene. His big break came with *Skins*, E4's talent hotbed that had already launched the careers of Dev Patel, Daniel Kaluuya and Nicholas Hoult when he joined Season 3 as bad boy James Cook.

His film career was supercharged by a searing turn in prison drama *Starred Up* in 2013, followed closely by Troubles-set thriller *'71* and a Hollywood breakout in Angelina Jolie's prestige picture, *Unbroken*, in which he starred as former Olympian Louis Zamperini, who becomes a prisoner of war in a true survival story. More US work followed, but he has found his best roles in recent years on the small screen, with Netflix's wildly underrated western *Godless* (2017), and the BBC's *The North Water* (2021) and *SAS: Rogue Heroes* (2022; Season 2 incoming).

Next up, O'Connell has another project that's sure to attract a lot of attention. *Back to Black* – the Amy Winehouse biopic being made with the permission of the late singer's estate – brings to the screen an indelible moment in recent British cultural history. Marisa Abela (*Industry*) stars as Winehouse, and O'Connell is Blake Fielder-Civil; the film examines Winehouse's life through the prism of that all-consuming relationship. O'Connell was director Sam Taylor-Johnson's first choice for the role and was cast first, meaning he was involved when they were testing actors to play Winehouse.

'A good thing about those tests is, I like to approach my work openly,' he says. 'I like to try things, and I like to get it wrong. Getting it wrong sometimes, and figuring it out, and embarrassing yourself once or twice along the way, perhaps. Thankfully Marisa is that type of actor where she's open, and she wants to experiment, and she wants to try things. I was really blown away by her.'

The role is a reminder of O'Connell's potent charisma, and showcases that raw, unvarnished energy that hasn't diminished over the near two decades he's appeared on screen. And he's got no plans to slow down now. 'I'm 33,' he says. 'A lot of my favourite actors were turning in their best work at my age. If that applies to me, that's something to be excited about. At the moment, that is my main ambition, to figure out what's next, and keep churning out my best work. And hopefully I never stop, you know?'

As Louis Zamperini in Angelina Jolie's *Unbroken*

ALAMY, STUDIOCANAL

**Amy Winehouse and Blake Fielder-Civil's lives played out across the tabloids, who were reporting on their every move. What are your memories of that time?**

I just remember it feeling very ruthless, and that there was almost an acceptance in the public that that level of intrusion was OK. I think we've learned by now that it's not. I like to think that by now we have a little bit of a different attitude in how we respect people's privacy, albeit if they're in the public eye or not.

I don't think Amy signed up to that level of harassment. I don't think Blake did either. It's something I do have quite an opinion on. I guess it is a real negative by-product of the success that she had.

**How did Sam Taylor-Johnson pitch her take on this to you?**

The fact that it was written by Matthew Greenhalgh [*Nowhere Boy*, *Film Stars Don't Die in Liverpool*] was a massive draw. I love Matthew's scripts. I think he's one of the best writers in the country. He's a friend. It was that, basically. [Sam] just told me that it was me she had in mind for Blake, and she hadn't really considered anyone else for it.

I had to go away and think about it, naturally. And then I jumped on as part of the process, and I got involved in finding Amy. So I was around for chemistry reads and auditions, if you will. And that's when we stumbled across Marisa [Abela]. I just think she does something phenomenal with this role. It's been a real joy from start to finish.

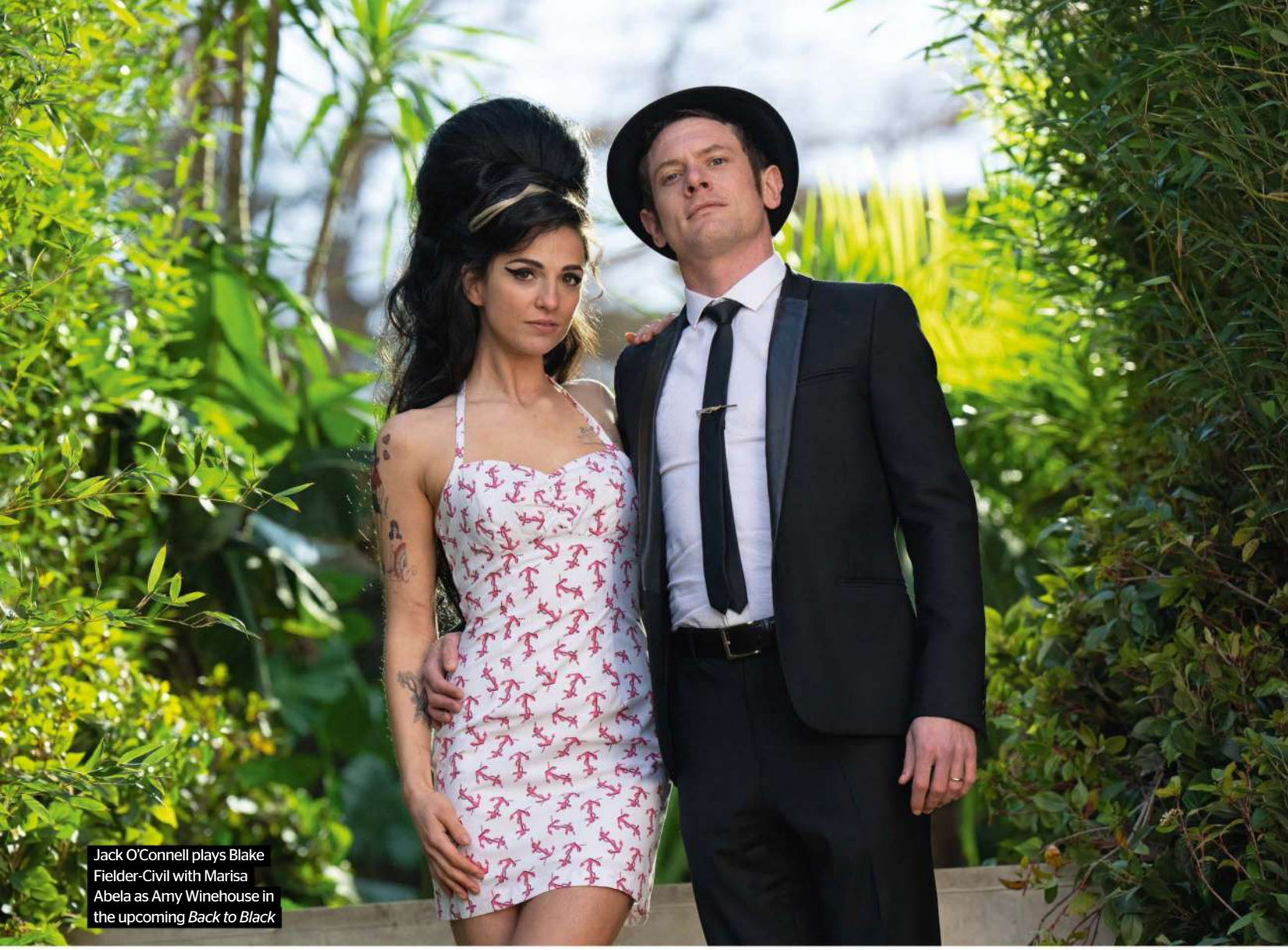
**Was it a long process to find the right person for Amy?**

Not as far as I'm aware. I just kind of turned up to this meeting. Marisa was one of the actors we were looking at, and she just smacked it out of the park. It was so obviously going to be her.

**How did it feel playing opposite someone who is portraying an iconic figure with a distinctive look and voice? Did you double take at all?**



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS



Jack O'Connell plays Blake Fielder-Civil with Marisa Abela as Amy Winehouse in the upcoming *Back to Black*

Yeah, daily. Even as [recently] as watching the trailers that [just came out]. I've seen the film, and so I was experiencing that a lot, watching Marisa's performance. It's been one of the biggest thrills of my career, to watch her go about her work, and adopt this role, and put the amount of graft that needed to take place on her part in order to get this right.

I just feel like she's come from such a place of understanding that it's really allowed her to do something really phenomenal. It was a wild, wild thrill to watch her go about her work.

**Did you have any hesitation about playing someone from such a recent moment in history?**

I guess so. I mean, we're talking 20 years on. It's still historical in that sense. It's surprising because obviously I have lived experience of that time. That's quite unique.

I suppose the added pressure of Blake… obviously, Blake's still around. So, naturally, there was that. It was important to me to get on a level with him. But, I feel a lot of nostalgia for this period, and it was great to bring that to the work. I'm younger than Blake, but I remember this time.

> *'I FEEL A LOT OF NOSTALGIA FOR THIS PERIOD'*

I remember Camden then. I remember the music then. I remember the fashion. It was cool to be from around there. The music that was coming out of that scene was amazing. It's still amazing today. It was amazing to apply some lived experience to the role.

**What was it like meeting Blake?**

The meeting initially for me was not to go in and study him, because I think I was just going to be guided by the writing, and guided by what's available of him out there. In terms of how he sounds tonally, and dialect, etc – that's all out there.

I think one thing that was eye-opening to me was how much I got on with him, and how much I felt I could relate to him. Obviously, I didn't have any preconceived notion that that would be the case, but I came away from the meeting just feeling like he was the type of geezer that I'd already met, or the type of fella that I already knew anyway.

I guess I put that down to the environment that he came up in, and being able to relate to that. You know, he likes his football. He's a very devoted father.

I definitely, definitely got the sense that his love for Amy was very genuine. These were all bonuses. These were all things I didn't even hope to acquire, but, having done so, [they were] invaluable to me in informing how I was going to portray him.

**Have you spoken to him since? Has he had the chance to see the film?**

We talk about football. He's a Millwall fan, I'm a Derby County fan. All our interactions consist of football chat [laughs].

**You came to fame at a pretty young age. Were there any aspects of their story that you related to?**

I don't think I ever attracted the kind of attention that Amy or Blake did. I definitely remember them being quite frequently in the news cycle at that time. There might be similarities, but they're definitely distinct. I think there are certainly levels to it.

I didn't have hordes of paparazzi loitering outside where I was living, trying to take pictures of me either looking good or looking bad deliberately, or just trying to spin stories, be it true or false. I've never had that, and, touch wood, I never will, because it appears to be fucking dreadful.

**You've played real people a few times across your career. Does that change your approach at all, compared with a fictional character?**
I'd like to think it was still the same. You're still diligent. There is still that want and hunger to get it right, and the want to study, or what have you. I suppose it all depends on how much you feel the public already know about the original, and whether that sort of limits what licence you have, and how much detail you can invent, or how much detail you have to just recreate.

**What is it you tend to look for in a role these days, and has your approach to what you're looking for changed much since you started out?**
I think so, definitely. The more you do it, the more you learn. In my case, there's been a lot of learning on the job, and I don't think you stop learning. New challenges are always welcome. They're always exciting. But I think what remains the same is that I was told from a young age to be considerate as to what I've just done, and hope that what you do next brings a different inflection, and brings a different set of challenges and requirements.

That's why, whether it's TV, film or theatre, it can be enjoyable to bounce off one, and then straight off into another. If they are different, then that's thrilling.

**Do you remember when it first struck you that you could make a living this way?**
It still is the dream to be doing this for a living. Not many people get to do this, where I'm from. I count myself incredibly fortunate. I think when I initially started to believe it was possible was when I got into the [Televison Workshop] in Nottingham, because careers had been developed from there previously, and so it was proven that it could be done.

I got into that workshop when I was 13. Whereas any experiences with drama before that might have just been fucking about at school, and just an hour where you weren't sat at a desk.

It was great that drama was compulsory at my school, and so we had to do it. I enjoyed it, and got referred to the workshop in Nottingham. I guess that's when I started thinking, 'Hold on, there's a chance I could have a pop at this, and make it happen.'

**When you started out in acting, did you feel like an outsider because of coming from a working-class background?**
I think I still do, to be honest. To be fair, I think there's always that. It's not typically

# FIVE STAR TURNS

**SKINS** 2009-2013
E4's teen drama was already a cult phenomenon by the time O'Connell joined the cast as part of its second generation. Yet his hard-drinking hedonist Cook added more fuel to the fire with his boundary-pushing antics ('Let's go fucking mental!').

**STARRED UP** 2013
David Mackenzie's prison drama gave O'Connell another powder-keg role in volatile inmate Eric, a young offender transferred to the lock-up where his estranged dad (Ben Mendelsohn) is incarcerated. 'I wanted to give a mature depth to him,' says the actor.

**'71** 2014
Having once considered a life in the army, O'Connell finally got to play soldier in Yann Demange's drama about a British squaddie abandoned in 70s Belfast. According to the director, Jack's 'soulfulness and complexity' made him perfect for the part.

**GODLESS** 2017
O'Connell spent weeks training with genuine cowboys for his role in Netflix's western series, an injured outlaw on the lam who finds refuge in a town run by women. 'By the end I was one of the boys,' he remembers.

**LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER** 2022
To prepare for his part as gamekeeper Mellors, rugged lover of Emma Corrin's titular aristo, O'Connell sought counsel from an old drama teacher at Nottingham's Television Workshop. 'He worships D.H. Lawrence and helped me know the character,' the actor recalls. **NS**

E4, ALAMY



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

a working-class vocation. So that is omnipresent. I think any other working-class actor would agree. That's just the way it is, you know? It's something to be proud of, I think.

**Have things improved since?**
I think diversification is apparent, and, you know, I want to believe that diversification is happening. But I don't think that things are any easier for people from a working-class background now – not compared to when I started out. If anything, I think there were more roles and more opportunities when I was starting out than there are at this current moment in time. For example, where I trained, the school that made drama compulsory, can't afford to do that any more. They took drama off the curriculum about 10 years ago. It starts there, really, doesn't it? Opportunities, and getting into the industry. All I've seen is those channels cease to exist. And you would have thought it would have gone the other way.

**Working with fellow Midlander Shane Meadows on *This Is England* must have been a formative experience?**
Oh my God, yeah, totally. That was my first film, and Shane's way of working was very improvised, and very spontaneous. I don't think any of us really knew the narrative. I don't think Shane did until he got into the edit. It was a great way to work. It was quite difficult, then, to understand what a script was after working with Shane… I look back on that experience very, very fondly.

> *'EVERY JOB YOU DO IS DEFINING IN SOME WAY'*

**What else felt like big turning points in your career?**
It's hard to think of one, definitely. Of course, meeting Angelina [Jolie, director of *Unbroken*] was very influential – that kind of opened things up in the States for me in a way that probably wouldn't have happened if I hadn't met her. But, you know, I think focusing on the here and now – I think every job you do is defining in some way. It's looking out for the next one. I think you're only as good as your next one.

***Skins* was established by the time you joined, but it has proven to be such a crucible for young talent, with so many cast members who have gone on to do great things. What do you attribute that success to?**
I think that a lot of it was how it was cast. And now we've seen the *Skins* cohort go out and achieve brilliant things in the industry since then. It appears, coming out of it, that it's been available to a whole new generation now. People will still approach me and want to talk about *Skins*, which I love, because I'm immensely proud of that show. It lives on, and I think that's a testament to the great writing that we had. *Skins* employed a lot of young writers. I think it made things more authentic on the page.

I jumped onto *Skins* when it was already two seasons in, so it was already this thing. Another great time. Another thing that I look back on and feel immense pride for.

***Starred Up* was another big moment. Did you sense that when you were looking at that job?**
It felt good while we were making it, for sure. Again, it was quite a relaxed approach with the script and with the dialogue. It was very loosely structured, so we could bring our own interpretation, and no two takes, really, were the same.

What was amazing about that was, because we had the one location – Crumlin Road Gaol in Belfast, and obviously it's set in London – we just had freedom to shoot what we wanted, when we wanted. So we kept it chronological. We shot that story pretty much start to finish, which is unheard of. It's a great luxury if you can afford to have it. We obviously benefitted by just having one location to arrange for the whole shoot, which is, in itself, a rarity.

It felt really good while we were making that, and I'm not surprised that it did as well as it's done.

**You've gravitated towards a lot of intense roles. Do you find that stuff hard to shake, or can you leave it behind at the end of each day?**
Not at the end of each day. I think when you're in it, you kind of stay in it, to a degree, especially if you're on location, and you're not going home – you have the opportunity to stay in it. And that's great, because you can then just bounce into the next day. You're kind of already there. That's an amazing sensation.

But whether they're intense or not, it's nice to stay in that. I think at the end of a job, you put it away, and you say 'ta-ra', and you go and do whatever you need to do.

Being on a roll is great. Bouncing off one job straight into another – that's also great. It's just staying at it, because it is a muscle. It's important to keep it up, whichever way you can.

## JACK O'CONNELL IN NUMBERS

**1**
BAFTA – 2014's Rising Star Award

**$338M**
The box-office take of O'Connell's highest-grossing film, *300: Rise of an Empire*

**18**
Episodes of *Skins* in which he appeared

**22**
Pounds lost for his role in *Unbroken*

**13**
Age at which O'Connell started learning at the Television Workshop in Nottingham

**Did you ever get intimidated when you started working with big US names like Angelina Jolie, Jodie Foster, George Clooney, and Michael Mann more recently?**
I do, yeah. I get nervous. I think the first day on set – the biggest ones especially – there's always nerves. And I think that does apply when you're working with big names, big titans, big heavy-hitters. That just comes from a place of earnestness, and wanting to deliver.

The nervousness is definitely there, and it's something you feel. But you have to use it to your advantage, and you have to use it as another source of energy. And then eventually that subsides. Eventually, you get comfortable, and that subsides. And then you're in a place where you're out of your comfort zone.

One of the things I like best about this job is to throw yourself into an environment that you don't necessarily know or feel comfortable in, and then to find your feet. You sink or swim.

## *'THE FIRST DAYS ON SET THERE'S ALWAYS NERVES'*

**Do you try to balance projects based in the UK with those in the US?**
I guess so. It's what's speaking to me at the time. Currently I'm looking at plays because I haven't done theatre for quite a while. That's where my focus is at the moment.

I love working out there, and I love working over here. What's great about this job is that it's all over the place. You can find yourself in these really amazing locations that you'd have never got to see. You make decisions in real time based on, 'What is speaking to me?'

**Talking of locations, *The North Water* took you to extremes. Did you relish filming in those freezing conditions?**
I look back on it today and it blows my mind where we were. It was challenging, for sure, but I was feeling hugely fortunate. Not many people get to go up to the Arctic, and get to shoot, and make a series there. It was great, yes, and the people that we had on board as well on that – it just added to the enormity of that experience. Colin [Farrell], Stephen [Graham], all the lads involved. Andrew Haigh directing.

Playing ship's doctor Patrick Sumner in TV series *The North Water*

It's another thing I look back on in sort of disbelief. We were living in cabins on this icebreaker ship. There were some evenings where we'd finish shooting, and we were getting some shut-eye, and the ship was on a voyage, off to our next location somewhere with more ice. We were constantly chasing ice. It was not something I ever pictured myself doing. The reality of it was mind-blowing.

**You've not done much blockbuster franchise material. Has that been a conscious choice?**
Just the way things have shaken out. There's never been a conversation where I've turned around and said, 'Look, I don't want to do that.' There's no exclusivity involved there. It's just literally the way it's shaken out. The jobs I've ended up doing are ones that we've taken on board at the time, decisions we made at the time. Again, there's never been any real want to pursue that either.

**Have you ever had any auditions for superhero stuff that hasn't worked out for whatever reason?**
[Laughs] No comment.

**Your name's often on lists of potential James Bond actors. Is that something that would appeal?**
I mean, listen, if something like that comes my way, sure. I'd just treat it the same way: I'd read it, see who's directing. Do they want me? Cool. Let's chat. Is the script belting? Then cool. OK, let's definitely chat.

It's not something I'm going to turn my nose up at. I'm sure there's a long, long list. I'm sure that list is highly competitive, and I'm sure that there are some phenomenal actors being considered for it.

If I'm somewhere along that list – brilliant. That, in itself, is an achievement. But, again, a lot of that stuff – as you find with quite a lot in this industry – is out of my hands. You just roll with the punches.

**Would you be nervous of any project on that kind of scale, with the level of global fame that would come with it?**
I suppose, yes, it is something to consider. But I guess by now it's just part and parcel of what you do. If something you're in is really that successful, then that's great. If loads of people have taken to it, and have enjoyed it… I'm an actor. That's the point.

I don't know. To answer your question properly, I think you've got to have something other than that. I think this is important for any artist. There has to be something that takes you out of that, that you can escape from and be without that. I don't think that's why we make things. We make things to tell stories, and to move people along the way. Any of the other stuff that you're referring to, I think is secondary. But, yeah, of course it would make you nervous. Of course it would.

**Do you stay off social media to help maintain a degree of privacy?**
I'll be candid, man – I'm not on social media because I just can't be arsed. I just can't be arsed with having something that lures me like that, to scroll at it, and to gawk at it. It's not for me, man. That's all I can say.

**Looking ahead, you've got Series 2 of the BBC's *SAS: Rogue Heroes* coming up. What can we expect?**
I think the same again. I think it's belting. I think it's a good, honest telling of these lads. Stephen Woolfenden is directing it this time. I've seen it. I love it. I can't wait for people to see it. I had a lot of fun on that job. A lot of fun. It's tough, but it has to be. Playing Paddy Mayne is good fucking fun. I was over the moon with how [Series 1] got received, and obviously it's a Steven Knight script, isn't it? We've got everything going for us when that's the case. He's delivered again. I hope that we have.

**Are there any films or shows of yours that you're really proud of but didn't get seen as widely as you might have hoped?**
Oof. I don't know. I'd probably feel like a dickhead saying it, you know? There's not a job on my resume that I'm not proud of, and that's a great position to be in. I'd point to every one of them, and feel a level of fondness about it, and feel very justified as to why we made that. That is right up until this present day. I think the easy answer to that is all of them.

**And finally, any roles or genres you haven't tackled yet that you'd love to?**
There are definitely directors out there, and there's definitely actors out there that I'm eager to work with, more so than any particular genre. I wouldn't want to jinx it [by naming names], but the list is long. I'm very keen to tick them off.

**BACK TO BLACK OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 12 APRIL.**

## JACK O'CONNELL LINE READING

**'FOLLOW THE BLOOD!'**
**BRETT**
EDEN LAKE

**'You just burn, kid. You just burn, just keep it all on the inside'**
**JAMES COOK**
SKINS

**'YOU WANT COARSER TREATMENT WITH ME'**
**OLIVER MELLORS**
LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER (2022)

ALAMY: RAOHELL SMITH

EDITED BY
MATTHEW LEYLAND
@TOTALFILM_MATTL

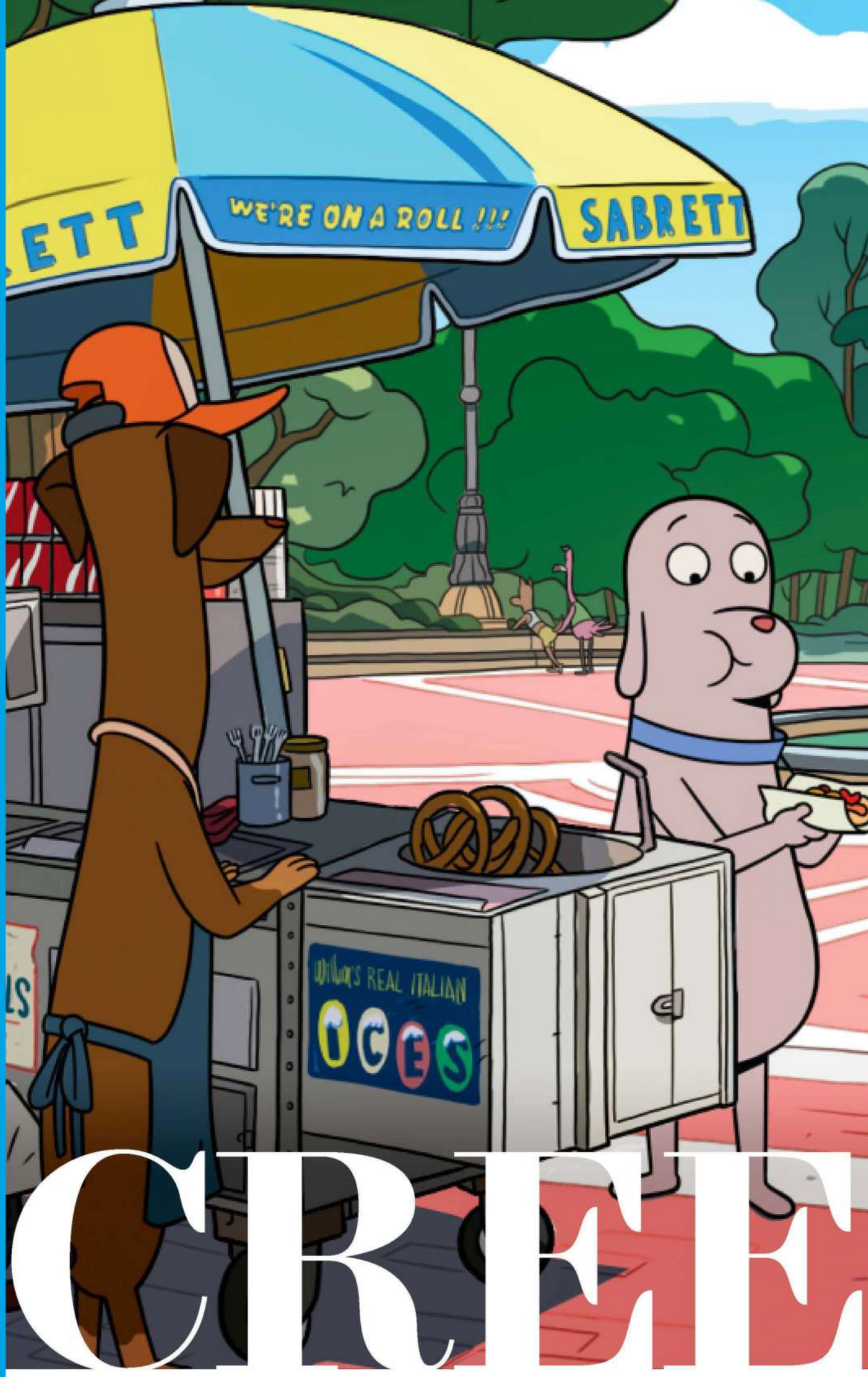
★★★★★
LEAVES YOU SPEECHLESS

★★★★★
QUIETLY BRILLIANT

★★★★★
COUPLE OF TALKING POINTS

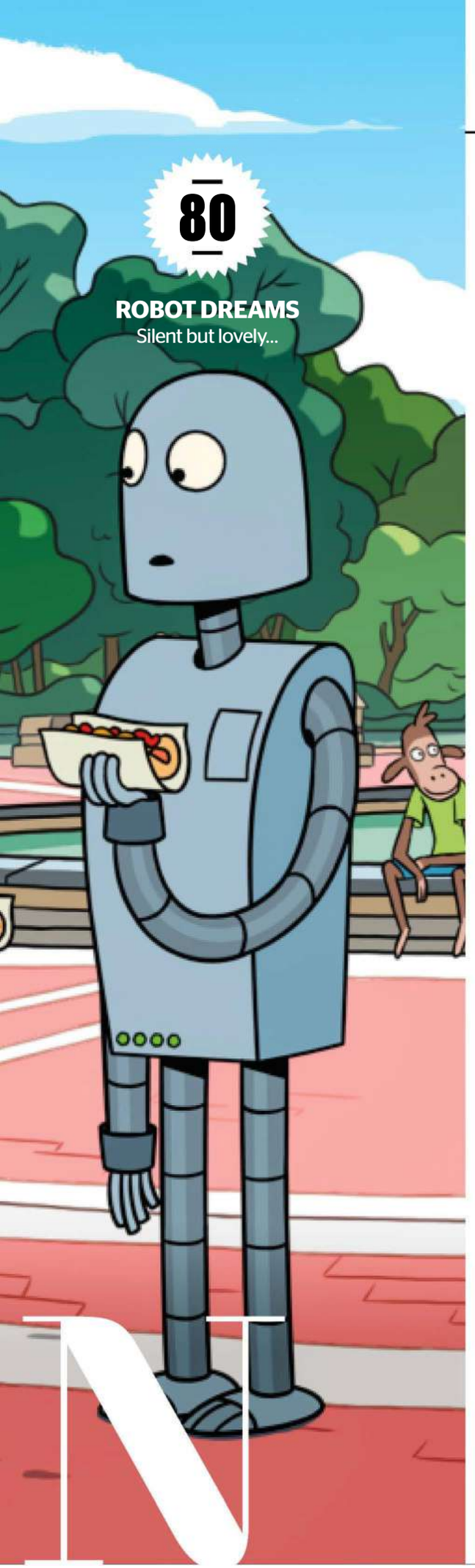
★★★★★
MUTE IT

★★★★★
UNSPEAKABLE




# SCREEN

THE WORLD'S MOST TRUSTED MOVIE



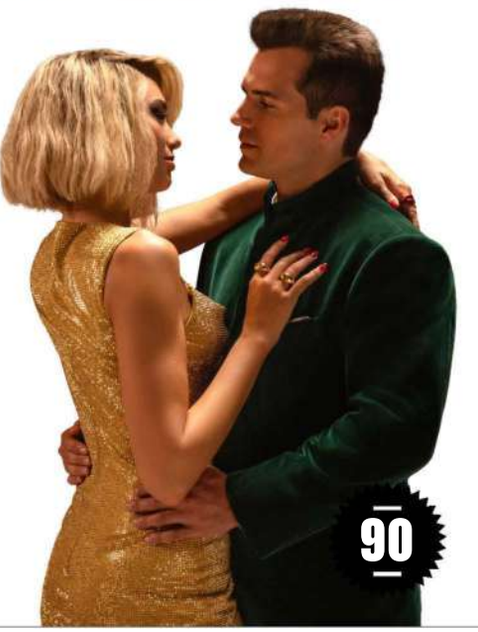
80

**ROBOT DREAMS**
Silent but lovely...

82

84

86



90

89

| OUT NOW | | |
|---|---|---|
| American Star | ★★★★ | p87 |
| Argylle | ★★ | p90 |
| Bob Marley: One Love | ★★ | p87 |
| The Bricklayer | ★★ | p90 |
| Eureka | ★★★★ | p88 |
| Head Count | ★★★ | p88 |
| Madame Web | ★ | p87 |
| Monolith | ★★★★ | p90 |
| Orion and the Dark | ★★★★ | p90 |
| Showing Up | ★★★★ | p86 |
| Spaceman | ★★★★ | p82 |

| 1 MARCH | | |
|---|---|---|
| Driving Mum | ★★★★ | p83 |
| Four Daughters | ★★★★ | p83 |
| Lisa Frankenstein | ★★★ | p82 |
| Red Island | ★★★★ | p85 |

| 8 MARCH | | |
|---|---|---|
| Copa 71 | ★★★★ | p89 |
| Do Not Expect Too Much from the End of the World | ★★★★ | p83 |
| High & Low: John Galliano | ★★★★ | p88 |
| The Inventor | ★★★ | p83 |
| Origin | ★★★ | p87 |
| Shayda | ★★★ | p85 |
| Vindication Swim | ★★ | p85 |

| 11 MARCH | | |
|---|---|---|
| Dogman | ★★★ | p89 |

| 15 MARCH | | |
|---|---|---|
| Banel & Adama | ★★★★ | p85 |
| Drive-Away Dolls | ★★★ | p84 |
| Monster | ★★★★ | p88 |
| The New Boy | ★★★ | p83 |

| 22 MARCH | | |
|---|---|---|
| Baltimore | ★★★ | p90 |
| The Delinquents | ★★★★ | p87 |
| Late Night with the Devil | ★★★★ | p86 |
| The Persian Version | ★★★ | p88 |
| Robot Dreams | ★★★★ | p80 |

| 25 MARCH | | |
|---|---|---|
| Lovely, Dark, and Deep | ★★ | p85 |

**ALSO RELEASED**

We couldn't see them in time for this issue, so head to gamesradar.com/totalfilm for reviews of the following:

| TITLE | RELEASE DATE |
|---|---|
| Damsel | 8 March |
| Dune: Part Two | 1 March |
| Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire | 22 March |
| Immaculate | 22 March |

**For more reviews visit gamesradar.com/totalfilm**

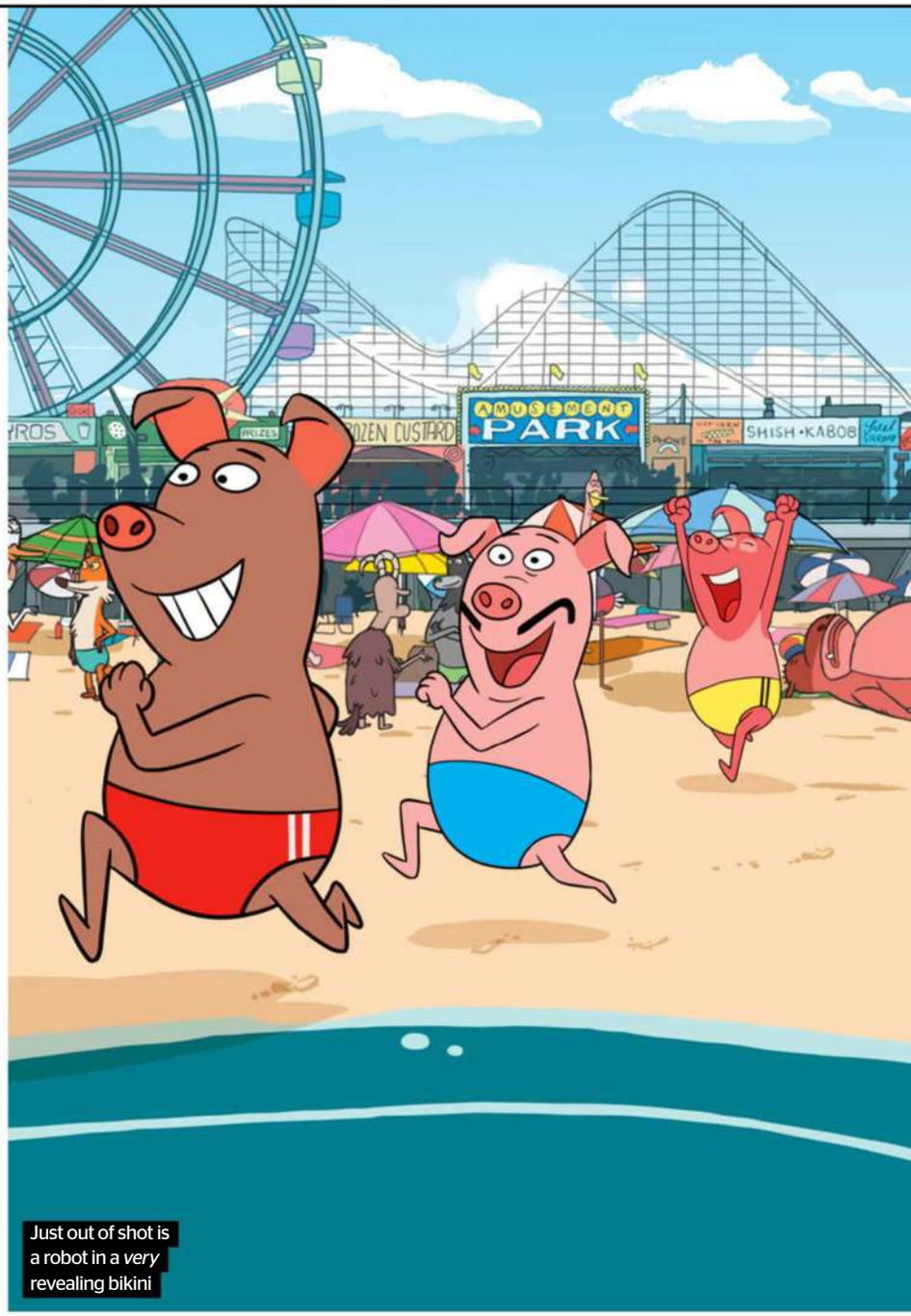

| EXTRAS | |
|---|---|
| Archive/Blu-ray reviews | p91-93 |
| TV, Extras, Soundtracks, Games, Books | p94-98 |


# REVIEWS

# ROBOT DREAMS PG

## There are no words...

★★★★★ **OUT 22 MARCH** CINEMAS




Just out of shot is a robot in a *very* revealing bikini

**SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED**

**THE IRON GIANT**
1999
Brad Bird's touching tale of a boy-and-bot friendship that sparks Cold War pandemonium.

**THE RED TURTLE**
2017
Stunning (and silent) Oscar-nominated animated fantasy about a family's battle for desert-island survival.

**BRIAN AND CHARLES**
2022
A lonely inventor bonds with his ramshackle robot in this toasty British buddy comedy.

*For more reviews visit gamesradar.com/totalfilm*

**Do androids really dream of electric sheep? Robot reveries turn out to be far more rich and soulful than Philip K. Dick suggested in Pablo Berger's heartwarming (and sometimes heartbreaking) Oscar-nominated animation about a lonely New York City dog and his robot buddy.**

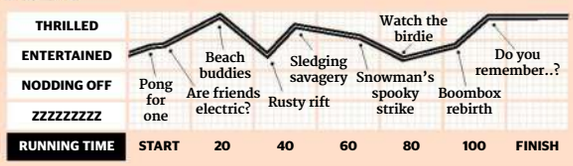
Surprisingly, this vibrant, moving story about the very human need for friendship and connection has zero humans in it, because Dog is pining for a pal in a bustling, *Zootropolis*-style animal-packed 1980s Big Apple. His solitary life of *Pong*-for-one and ready meals is transformed when he literally makes a friend, laboriously constructing Robot from a TV-advertised kit.

The second sizeable surprise is that this cleverly compassionate film also has no dialogue. Director Pablo Berger's lush silent-cinema take on Snow White, 2012's *Blancanieves*, proved he was a whiz at visual storytelling. But here he uses Chaplinesque physical comedy to show Dog and Robot's growing happiness, as they roller-disco dizzyingly in Central Park to Earth, Wind & Fire's *September*, which becomes 'their' song, commemorating the month they met.

Sweet, authentic facial expressions (strictly no stretchy cartoon shtick) signal Robot's gleeful wonder at discovering the joy of skyscrapers, fat squelchy hotdogs and a groovy octopus bucket-drummer on the subway. Rather than *Ron's Gone Wrong* AI-robot chaos, Dog and Robot's happy hang-outs have a charming *Brian and Charles* vibe, as Robot's childlike delight in NYC cements his bond with grateful Dog.

Berger's first animated outing (a passion-project adaptation of Sara Varon's 2007 graphic novel) is also a deliciously detailed love letter to New York City, painting a note-perfect recreation of noisy, scuzzy 80s streetlife for his funky, retro animal characters. It's all rendered in glowing colours and 2D 'clean line' *Tintin*-like animation. But when an idyllic day of Rockaway Beach swimming rusts Robot's joints and battery into immovability, New York bites back: the NYPD and City Hall force frantic Dog to leave him stranded on the firmly fenced-off beach till next summer.

**FILM PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE™**



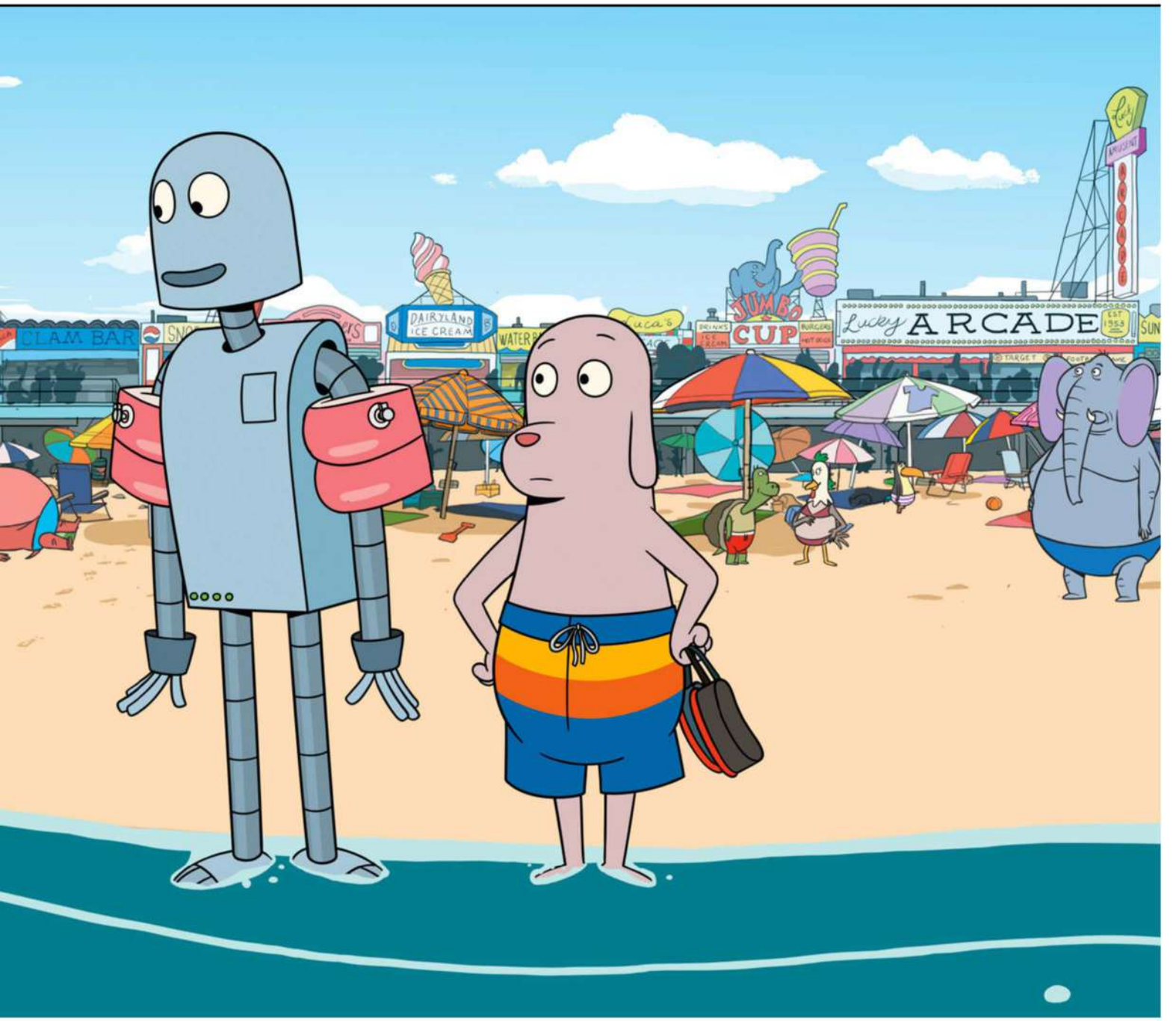

**DIRECTOR** Pablo Berger **SCREENPLAY** Pablo Berger **DISTRIBUTOR** Curzon **RUNNING TIME** 102 mins

Forking cleverly here, the film becomes more melancholic but also pleasingly ambitious, exploring Dog's guilty attempts at rescue and time-filling hobbies, while diving headlong into Robot's inner yearnings. As snow-covered Robot sinks into surreal worried-or-wacky dreams about a Dog reunion, the film's world opens wide and gets experimental. Soon he (and we) are reeling at encounters with rabbit rotters in a rowboat, twisty fantasy escapes, and a fourth-wall turnaround

CURZON



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS




whisking us into a wild *Wizard of Oz* tap-dancing extravaganza.

If Robot's reveries deepen the film's emotional themes, Dog's try-hard quests allow Berger to bring on delightful Jacques Tati-style comedy: take the soaring winter-sports slapstick with aggro anteaters for example, or Dog's trippy bowling date with a scary snowman. Using the same clean 2D style throughout all these episodes keeps everything unified, as do different, poignant soundtrack versions of *September*, the musical thread connecting distant Dog and Robot throughout. The drifty, dream-punctuated second half might puzzle younger kids, though its universal themes and visual gags are perfectly all-ages appropriate.

**'A deliciously detailed love letter to New York City, painting a note-perfect recreation of noisy, scuzzy 80s streetlife for [its] funky, retro characters'**

As is the film's sweet, un-snarky tone, free from sly *Futurama* satire or *BoJack Horseman* raunch.

Despite some nifty plot twists (including big bird love for Robot), the film does get too overlong and dawdling for its slender story. Still, paring back Dog and Robot's wild or wistful quests would have denied us the wealth of fun sight gags and sly detail (posturing punks, turnstile-jumpers, the sad pop-pop bubbles of microwaving a single portion of mac and cheese) that Berger loves to linger on. But his biggest coup is not getting too hung up on the notion of 'soulmates'; instead, he has created a dream-filled movie that identifies emotional realities about change and personal growth. For both Dog and Robot, it's not who you love, but how you love that matters.

**KATE STABLES**

**THE VERDICT** Berger's beautiful, heartfelt dog-and-bot bromance is a charming, wordless wonder that puts you in a New York state of mind.

Adam Sandler tries to remember where the zero-G loo is

# SPACEMAN 15

## Into the talking-spider-verse...

★★★★★ **OUT NOW** CINEMAS **1 MARCH** NETFLIX

**Johan Renck's (*Chernobyl*) film casts Adam Sandler as 'the loneliest man who has ever lived'. That's no wild claim: Sandler plays astronaut Jakub who, nine months into a mission to investigate a mysterious cloud by Jupiter, is the furthest from human contact that anyone has ever been.**

Jakub's eager to patch things up with his pregnant wife Lenka (Carey Mulligan) back on Earth; but this gorgeous existential sci-fi has more than space travel and despair on its mind. Before long, our hero forges a connection with a giant extraterrestrial spider with an abundance of emotional intelligence and a tiny human mouth, from which springs the voice of Paul Dano.

Yes, it sounds like the premise for a broad comedy – and *Spaceman* does deliver the occasional laugh. But this is an impactful and at times profound film, with a hauntingly lovely turn from Sandler.

From the alien spider's teeth to a host of glowing celestial bodies and even Sandler's ship's zero-gravity toilet, *Spaceman* is flush with careful detail. It's also a film filled with the unexpected – one that doesn't follow a familiar narrative structure, provide neat answers or make the viewer feel any less alone in this vast, cold universe. But for those who are open to the wonderfully weird, it offers up some deep truths, terrific performances and an alien gob that truly transfixes the attention. **LEILA LATIF**

**THE VERDICT** A soul-searching Adam Sandler excels in a sci-fi drama that's both way-out and weighty.

# LISA FRANKENSTEIN 15

## Bo(d)y meets girl...

★★★☆☆ **OUT 1 MARCH** CINEMAS

**John Hughes' Brat Pack movies meet Mary Shelley's Gothic classic in this comedy scripted by Diablo Cody (*Juno*, *Jennifer's Body*). Set in 1989, it centres on Lisa (Kathryn Newton), a high-schooler who lives with her father (Joe Chrest), stepmother (Carla Gugino) and stepsister Taffy (Liza Soberano), yet prefers to hang out at the local cemetery, among the tombstones.**

Though she has a crush on the editor of the school lit magazine (Henry Eikenberry), Lisa soon finds her real love – at the graveyard – when a corpse (*Riverdale*'s Cole Sprouse) comes back to life. He doesn't speak and cries tears that smell like vomit. Nevertheless, hiding him at home in her closet, Lisa is smitten – and becomes more so as things get increasingly macabre.

Directed by Zelda Williams (daughter of Robin), *Lisa Frankenstein* contains its share of LOLs. Another big plus is the musical interlude featuring a version of REO Speedwagon's *Can't Fight This Feeling*, adeptly sung by a game Newton. Sprouse gives an expressive, Edward Scissorhands-esque performance as 'The Creature' – but sadly, the more violent the film gets, the less engaging it becomes. The final act also drifts when it should arrow towards a darkly comic denouement. Still, filled with Cody's trademark wit and some nifty 80s design schemes, it's a slick, sick ride with strong teen appeal. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

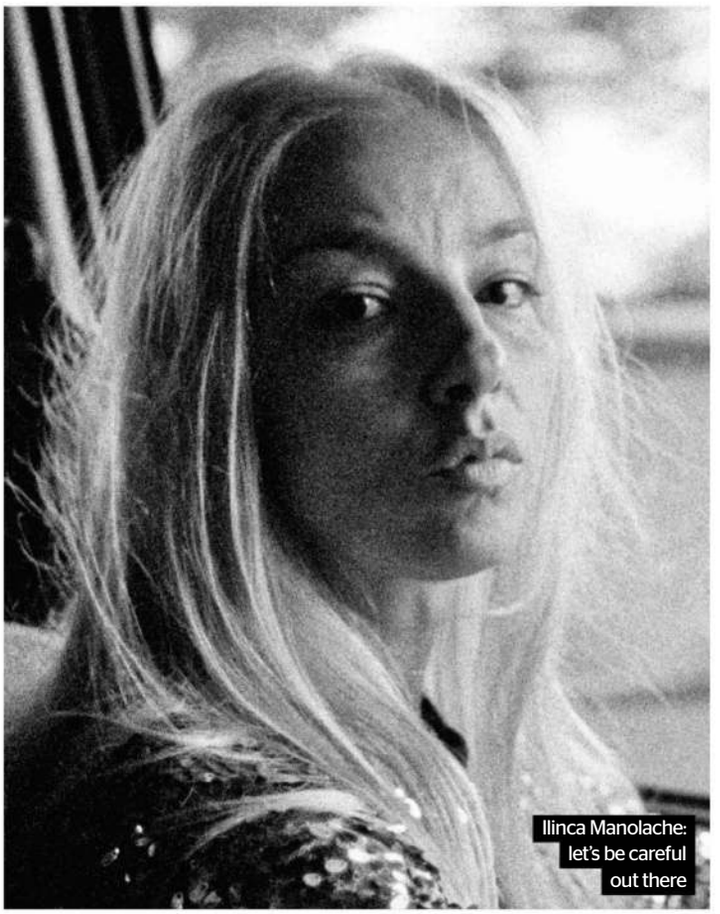
**THE VERDICT** A neat mash-up of high-school comedy and horror tropes. Pity it falters in the final third.

The nit nurse now offered a nighttime service

NETFLIX, UNIVERSAL, SOVEREIGN, TULL STORIES, MODERN FILMS, SIGNATURE



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS


Ilinca Manolache: let's be careful out there

# DO NOT EXPECT TOO MUCH FROM THE END OF THE WORLD 18

## Safety-video games...

★★★★★ **OUT 8 MARCH** CINEMAS

**A near-three-hour dark comedy about a frazzled production assistant interviewing candidates for a workplace safety video might not sound like many cinemagoers' idea of a good time. Throw in a cameo from controversial filmmaker Uwe Boll, nods to the repellent Andrew Tate and inserts of 1981 social-realist drama *Angela Goes On*, and Radu Jude's latest might seem an avant-garde provocation too far. But this restlessly inventive and scabrously funny film taps into universal and relatable truths.**

When she's not delivering tirades at fellow road users or making X-rated clips as Tate-satirising TikTok alter-ego Bobita, Ilinca Manolache's Angela proves that she's as smart as she is cynical – notably when she's running rings around Nina Hoss' entertainingly aloof exec.

Jude boldly flips from gritty black-and-white to colour for the tragicomic third act: a static long shot depicting the filming of the video that grows ever more hilarious and exasperating. With Manolache relegated to the sidelines, some of the film's spark is lost. But its critique of corporate culture comes through as loudly as Angela's potty-mouthed rants. **CHRIS SCHILLING**

**THE VERDICT** Expect plenty from this surprising and twistedly funny film – and to hear more from its spellbinding star.

## THE INVENTOR PG

★★★★★ **OUT 8 MARCH** CINEMAS

Stephen Fry plays Leonardo da Vinci in this modestly engaging whistlestop(-motion) tour of the Renaissance man's life and work. Also featuring the voices of Daisy Ridley (sidekick Marguerite de Navarre), Marion Cotillard (patron Louise de Savoy) and Matt Berry (the Pope), its somewhat meagre story documents da Vinci's quest to uncover the meaning of life, the universe and everything. Written/directed by *Ratatouille* scripter Jim Capobianco (and co-helmed by Pierre-Luc Granjon), it's nothing groundbreaking, but its visuals (using puppetry and traditional 2D animation) and gentle humour frequently charm. **JOEL HARLEY**

## DRIVING MUM 12A

★★★★★ **OUT 1 MARCH** CINEMAS

Iceland's Hilmar Oddsson puts the dead into deadpan with this marvellously mordant B&W comedy. When Jon's (Pröstur Leó Gunnarsson) mum passes away, she isn't any less truculent in death than life. Duly, he honours her demand to drive her body – glassy-eyed in the backseat – to her childhood village for burial. And slowly, surely, Jon learns to reconnect with the world. Against beautifully framed landscapes, an elegantly droll coming-of-middle-age road movie emerges, shot through with flashes of dawning life: the *Yes Sir, I Can Boogie* karaoke scene is a particular treat. **KEVIN HARLEY**

## FOUR DAUGHTERS 12A

★★★★★ **OUT 1 MARCH** CINEMAS

Writer/director Kaouther Ben Hania's fascinating Oscar-nominated documentary relates the story of Tunisian woman Olfa Hamrouni and her four daughters, two of whom fled to Libya in 2015 to join Islamic State. Shooting in a disused Tunis hotel, Hania experiments boldly with form, using first-person testimony from Olfa and her two younger children, rehearsals with actors playing the mother and the absent older siblings, and filmed reenactments of family memories. What's revealed is a cycle of suffering in which traumatic experiences are tragically passed from generation to generation. **TOM DAWSON**

## THE NEW BOY TBC

★★★★★ **OUT 15 MARCH** CINEMAS

Heavy on symbolic imagery, light on plot, writer/director Warwick Thornton's (*Sweet Country*) drama follows a nameless Aboriginal boy (newcomer Aswan Reid) as he's brought to an outback mission run by Cate Blanchett's troubled nun. Wilful and near-silent, he's treated with curiosity, before suspicion and fear creep in as he's revealed to possess strange – possibly divine – powers. More a loose collection of scenes than a cohesive narrative, it's still an enveloping audiovisual experience, with Thornton's gorgeous lensing almost matched by Nick Cave and Warren Ellis' expressive score. **CHRIS SCHILLING**

Having no car made driving away that much harder

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED

**KISS ME DEADLY**
1955
The briefcase at the heart of *Drive-Away Dolls* harks back to this noir classic's mystery box.

**FASTER, PUSSYCAT! KILL! KILL!**
1965
Female-led road-trip riotousness from sexploitation maven Russ Meyer.

**BURN AFTER READING**
2008
There's a precedent for dildos in Coen films... check out George Clooney's sex chair in this spy farce.

*For more reviews visit gamesradar.com/totalfilm*

# DRIVE-AWAY DOLLS 15

## It's all Coen south...

★★★★★ **OUT 15 MARCH** CINEMAS

**It perhaps says something about the Coen brothers' respective sensibilities that, when older sibling Joel went off to make 2021's *The Tragedy of Macbeth* in black and white with wife Frances McDormand, younger brother Ethan chose to dust off a raunchy crime romp he had written with his wife 20 years ago, and shoot it in eye-popping colour.**

A freewheeling road movie about two queer chums being pursued by hoods from Pennsylvania to Florida, *Drive-Away Dolls* is definitely not Shakespeare. But it is unmistakably a Coen(s) film, albeit one that feels more like a pastiche of their previous pictures than an innovative next chapter.

There are times when 'Throw-Away Dolls' might arguably have been a more suitable title for this knockabout caper, in which loquacious Texan Jamie (Margaret Qualley) and her prim friend Marian (Geraldine Viswanathan) take an impromptu road trip from Philadelphia to Tallahassee, in a rental car that just happens to have a sought-after suitcase secreted in its trunk. Said valise and its contents are prized enough for a sharp-suited mandarin dubbed 'The Chief' (Colman Domingo) to send two bumbling goons to retrieve it. Jamie, meanwhile, has her own mission improbable: to get Marian laid.

When Tricia Cooke – Ethan's spouse, the Coens' sometime-editor and a person who identifies as queer – conceived the film's scenario, it carried the more provocative moniker *Drive-Away Dykes*. Curiously, though, *Dolls* is more quaint than outrageous. Its 1999 setting and saucy details (a wall-mounted dildo here, a Sapphic slumber party there) lend it the air of a bawdy period piece from the *Porky's* and *Meatballs* era.

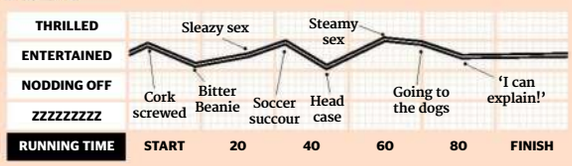
Coen and Cooke's stated aim was to homage both the trashy aesthetics of John Waters and early Almodóvar, and such noted 'sexploitation' purveyors as Russ Meyer and Doris Wishman. In this they are mostly successful – but it comes at the cost of their collaboration having a distinctive timbre of its own. Throw in a luggage-sized McGuffin straight out of *Pulp Fiction*, and we're left with a comedy steeped in déjà vu.

There is no denying, though, that Qualley and Viswanathan make a highly likeable duo in a film that also boasts entertaining cameos from the likes of Matt Damon, Pedro Pascal and pop star Miley Cyrus. **NEIL SMITH**

**DIRECTOR** Ethan Coen **STARRING** Margaret Qualley, Geraldine Viswanathan, Beanie Feldstein, Colman Domingo, Pedro Pascal **SCREENPLAY** Ethan Coen, Tricia Cooke **DISTRIBUTOR** Universal **RUNNING TIME** 84 mins

**THE VERDICT** Ethan Coen strikes out on his own with a frivolous frolic that wears its slightness like a badge of honour.

**FILM PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE™**




UNIVERSAL, CURZON, BLUE FINCH, PICNIK ENTERTAINMENT, WE ARE PARABLE, VERTIGO



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

## RED ISLAND 12A

★★★★★ **OUT 1 MARCH** CINEMAS, CURZON HOME CINEMA

Following on from 2017's *120 BPM*, director/co-writer Robin Campillo again draws on personal memories for this languid coming-of-age drama set on a French military base in Madagascar during the early 1970s, when the nation had its own growing pains. Sensitive eight-year-old Thomas (Charlie Vauselle) quietly observes the often-mysterious adult world around him and takes refuge in the exploits of masked superhero Fantômette. Sensually shot and making evocative use of period songs, *Red Island* imaginatively blends the personal and the political. **TOM DAWSON**

## LOVELY, DARK, AND DEEP 15

★★★★★ **OUT 25 MARCH** DIGITAL

*Barbarian* star Georgina Campbell finds herself in another nightmare scenario in writer/director Teresa Sutherland's debut, a tricksy horror largely set in the desolate wilds of a national park. Campbell plays Lennon, a ranger whose time monitoring the park gets increasingly fractious and dreamlike. The actor is a solid presence, shouldering the bulk of the narrative peril, but she's hampered by a workmanlike script. And while the atmosphere is amped up with an unnerving score and some eerie wide shots, actual scares are few and far between. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

## VINDICATION SWIM PG

★★★★★ **OUT 8 MARCH** CINEMAS

First-time director Elliott Hasler offers a warm-hearted but sentimental take on penniless Mercedes Gleitze's (Kirsten Callaghan) 1927 battles to be the first British woman to swim the Channel. It's a plucky attempt, but pretty period locations and jaunty fake newsreels can't compensate for the film's clunky scripting, halting pace and stilted performances (only John Locke's drunken, crabby swim coach registers). There's a fascinating *Chariots of Fire*-style story to be made about Gleitze's tenacity against the cruel sea, posh-rival cheats and sexist court cases. But sadly, this isn't it. **KATE STABLES**

## BANEL & ADAMA 12A

★★★★★ **OUT 15 MARCH** CINEMAS

As a drought devastates their small village in northern Senegal, a young married couple (Khady Mane and Mamadou Diallo, their chemistry sizzling) navigate their star-crossed romance in the face of local obligation and tradition. The feature debut of French-Senegalese director Ramata-Toulaye Sy, this haunting modern fable moves with poetic grace, juggling lingering views of the idyllic yet sun-ravaged desert with intimate close-ups of the townsfolk. The beauty belies the growing horror at the heart of the story, as a once-passionate love is engulfed by superstition and circumstance. **JOEL HARLEY**

*Shayda*: a tale of domestic jeopardy and renewal

## SHAYDA 15

### Taking shelter...

★★★★★ **OUT 8 MARCH** CINEMAS

**Inspired by the director's own experiences, Noora Niasari's film is a powerful look at both Iranian culture and domestic violence. Zar Amir Ebrahimi (who won Cannes' Best Actress for *Holy Spider* in 2022) delivers a nuanced turn in the title role, an Iranian mother-of-one who, after leaving abusive husband Hossein (Osamah Sami), finds refuge in a shelter for women in the Australian suburbs. Aided by the kindly Joyce (Leah Purcell), Shayda tries to get her life back on track alongside her young daughter Mona (Selina Zahednia).**

Knife-edge tension takes hold when Hossein reappears, raising the possibility that he may yet snatch Mona and smuggle her back to Iran. Like Asghar Farhadi's *A Separation* (2011) before it, Niasari's script touches on Iran's byzantine divorce laws, pressing home the jeopardy Shayda faces. She also manages to juggle microaggressions in the shelter with slivers of joy; an exuberant, unfettered dance sequence offers uplift. Meanwhile, the setting of 90s Australia conveys a sure sense of how abuse against women in the home is a universal issue.

Throughout, Ebrahimi and impressive newcomer Zahednia present a credible parent/child bond. The final third doesn't quite deliver on the set-up's promise, with the drama fizzling out somewhat. But this perceptive film – which won the Audience Award at last year's Sundance – still hits a nerve. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

**THE VERDICT** Though it lacks impact in places, this mother/daughter drama comes from the heart.

'You look like you could do with some exorcise'

# LATE NIGHT WITH THE DEVIL TBC

## Fright entertainment...

★★★★★ **OUT 22 MARCH** CINEMAS

**On Halloween 1977, as an anxious America looks on, TV host Jack Delroy (David Dastmalchian) puts on a special edition of his chat show, *Night Owls*. After losing his wife to cancer and slipping down the ratings, it's his chance to claw back some viewers. But his choice of guests – from an on-the-make medium (Fayssal Bazzi) to a cynical conjurer (Ian Bliss), a parapsychologist (Laura Gordon) and her possessed young patient (Ingrid Torelli) – proves unwise when things start happening on camera...**

Written, directed and edited by Australian brothers Cameron and Colin Cairnes (2012's *100 Bloody Acres*), shot in Melbourne and featuring an excellent, largely homegrown acting cast, it's an impeccable recreation of 1970s TV. As we cut from the live feed to black-and-white behind-the-scenes moments, we learn more about what we're seeing...

Dastmalchian shines as Delroy, mugging to the studio audience as things spiral out of control, while secretly rubbing his hands that he's created the TV event of the decade, and there are some nasty surprises along the way. But there's subtext as well as scares. Throwing elements of Watergate, the Manson family and *The Exorcist* into the mix, the Cairnes suggest an America so used to being manipulated that it has no idea who to trust any more.

**MATT GLASBY**

**THE VERDICT** Blending satire and shocks, this is like *Ghostwatch* for the post-truth generation.

# SHOWING UP 12

## Seize the clay...

★★★★★ **OUT NOW** DVD, BD, DIGITAL

**Lizzy (Michelle Williams) wears a perma-frown. A sculptor in Portland, she has a show in a week's time, but life won't let her focus on the twisted figures her fingers painstakingly craft. For starters, she has no hot water – and her landlady Jo (Hong Chau), who happens to be a more successful artist with a happier disposition, keeps putting off fixing it. And then Lizzy's cat brings in a wounded pigeon that needs to be cared for...**

Will healing the bird prove a salve for Lizzy's sourness? Can we expect a frenzy of inspiration to ensure the show's a success? And will Lizzy's dysfunctional family – Judd Hirsch and Maryann Plunkett as her divorced parents, John Magaro as a brother with mental-health issues – support Lizzy's big day?

Don't expect any big, showy answers. Director Kelly Reichardt, who previously collaborated with Williams on *Wendy and Lucy*, *Meek's Cutoff* and *Certain Women*, is a sculptor of intimate stories shorn of crude theatrics. *Showing Up* is typically subdued and subtle, chiselling delicately away to discover what it is that shapes people. There are tiny triumphs, minor setbacks; and although Reichardt naturally satirises the art world, she does so softly, while also recognising the hard graft that's required of most artists. No quirky geniuses here; just a focus on the quotidian that is, in its own way, extraordinary. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

**THE VERDICT** Indie auteur Kelly Reichardt and her muse Michelle Williams fashion a quiet drama that's worth showing up for.

Lizzy (Michelle Williams) works on her next piece

VERTIGO, MEDIUMRARE, SONY, BLACK BEAR, MUBI, PARAMOUNT



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

## MADAME WEB 12A

★☆☆☆☆ **OUT NOW** CINEMAS

Sony Pictures' quest to extend their live-action Spider-verse beyond the MCU continues with this spin-off starring Dakota Johnson as clairvoyant ambulance driver Cassandra Webb, who becomes entangled with three teens (Isabela Merced, Celeste O'Connor and Sydney Sweeney) and their would-be killer (Tahar Rahim). Rather than kicking off a new universe of heroes, *Madame Web* feels more like a failed TV pilot, complete with sluggish action and cheap-looking costumes. Further bogged down by egregious product placement, it's a big disappointment – but we all saw it coming… **JOEL HARLEY**

## ORIGIN 12A

★★★☆☆ **OUT 8 MARCH** CINEMAS

Ava DuVernay's (*Selma*) biographical drama delves into the creation of Isabel Wilkerson's 2020 non-fiction bestseller *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*. During her voyage of discovery, Wilkerson (Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor) experiences a series of devastating personal losses that give her mission greater meaning. The result is a film that works as both a broad educational tool and a tender portrait of grief. It may ultimately feel too simplistic for those who've read the book – and too scholastic in places for those who haven't – but it remains a powerful conversation-starter. **JANE CROWTHER**

## AMERICAN STAR 15

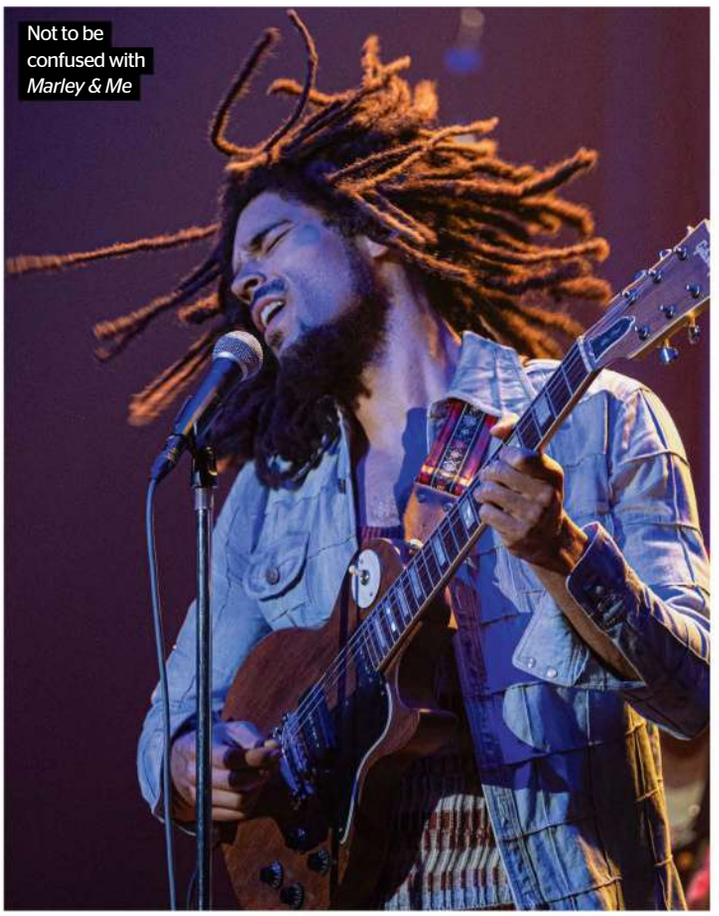
★★★★☆ **OUT NOW** CINEMAS, DIGITAL

Ageing hitman Wilson (Ian McShane) lands in the Canary Islands for one last job that starts to feel more like a retirement holiday. But then trouble arrives in the form of Adam Nagaitis' younger assassin, and the nature of Wilson's brief is belatedly revealed. Until the inevitable violent climax, Gonzalo López-Gallego's film is a beguilingly languid mood piece, distinguishing itself via the twin landscapes of McShane's rugged features and the similarly handsome Fuerteventura scenery. There's fine support, too, from Nora Arnezeder as impetuous expat Gloria. **CHRIS SCHILLING**

## THE DELINQUENTS 12A

★★★★☆ **OUT 22 MARCH** CINEMAS

Unfolding in Buenos Aires and the bucolic Cordoban countryside, this leisurely existential fable from Argentinian writer/director Rodrigo Moreno begins in heist-movie territory. Middle-aged bank clerk Moran (Daniel Elias) plans to steal $600,000 from his employers, relying on his colleague Roman (Esteban Bigliardi) to stash the money, all while he serves a three-year jail sentence. Awash with playful doublings and contrasts, Moreno's movie refuses to be boxed in by genre conventions, heading off instead on all manner of unexpected and entertaining digressions. **TOM DAWSON**



Not to be confused with *Marley & Me*

## BOB MARLEY: ONE LOVE 12A

### There's a lot to jam in…

★★☆☆☆ **OUT NOW** CINEMAS

**Britain's Kingsley Ben-Adir was highly praised for playing Malcolm X in *One Night in Miami*, and made a decent Barack Obama in Showtime's *The Comey Rule*. Mimicry alone, alas, does not ignite the ganja in a reverential homage to the Jamaican reggae icon that is lacking his blazing charisma.**

Reinaldo Marcus Green's film begins in 1976 with Bob and wife Rita (Lashana Lynch) almost being slain by gunmen at their Kingston home: a nerve-jangling brush with death that marks the film's most dramatic and emotional episode. Green and his three co-writers frame this as a misfortune Bob shrugged off triumphantly by recording his landmark album *Exodus*. The film, in contrast, never quite manages to move on, remaining in a muted funk for much of its running time.

*King Richard* director Green tries to vary the mood by whisking Bob to London and then across Europe on a whirlwind tour. For all the terrific music we are treated to en route, however, it's all a bit glum.

Ben-Adir diligently duplicates Marley's distinctive patois and jerky on-stage movements. But there's no alchemical amalgam between artiste and thespian like there was in *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *Rocketman*. Fans have been waiting a while for an authorised Marley biopic; now it's arrived, every little thing is not all right. **NEIL SMITH**

**THE VERDICT** Capturing Marley's essence proves an impossible task in a biopic that nears hagiography.

## HEAD COUNT 15

★★★☆☆ **OUT NOW** DIGITAL

There's a dash of Tarantino and a pinch of the Coens in this lively debut from the Burghart brothers (Ben and Jacob). A Kansas-set slice of pulp fiction, it stars Aaron Jakubenko (*Tidelands*) as Kat, an escaped con who, at the outset, is seen with his own revolver being held to his head by an unknown aggressor. How many bullets has the gun fired? That's part of the mystery, as Kat recalls prior events across several interlinked chapters. It's nothing new per se, but it's still a brisk 80-minute ride that boasts some ace supporting characters, intricate plotting and dialogue that occasionally fizzes.

**JAMES MOTTRAM**

## EUREKA 15

★★★★☆ **OUT NOW** CINEMAS

Three apparently disparate narratives are connected by themes of colonial oppression in this singular drama by Argentinian auteur Lisandro Alonso. A gunslinger (Viggo Mortensen, star of Alonso's 2014 film *Jauja*) searches for his kidnapped daughter in a brutalist black-and-white western; a Native American police officer (real-life law enforcer Alaina Clifford) navigates a rough night on the job; and an indigenous community encounters a strange bird in 1970s Brazil. True edification is AWOL in a voyage through time, space and multiple genres, but the journey's an exhilarating one. **JOEL HARLEY**

Eri (Hinata Hiiragi) and Minato (Soya Kurokawa)

# MONSTER 12A

## Points of view...

★★★★☆ **OUT 15 MARCH** CINEMAS

**Sharing its name with Charlize Theron's 2003 Oscar-winner arguably doesn't do Hirokazu Kore-eda's latest many favours, prompting as it does misleading expectations that he has ventured into serial killer or even rampaging beast territory. The reality, mercifully, is rather more benign, even if it does stay teasingly elusive for much of what constitutes the Japanese director's first film on native soil since 2018's *Shoplifters* (after forays to France and South Korea to make 2019's *The Truth* and 2022's *Broker*, respectively).**

A fretful single mother (Sakura Ando) is concerned by her young son's strange behaviour, and decides to consult his school's seasoned principal (Yûko Tanaka). Satisfactory answers are less than forthcoming, though, leading her to suspect that young Minato (Soya Kurokawa) is being abused by one of his teachers (Eita Nagayama).

Things are not always as they appear, though – a truism pushed home by having the action played out, *Rashomon*-style, from three distinctly different perspectives. Only when all the pieces are in place do we see the whole picture, with seemingly unimportant details from the opening third paying off down the line in ways that are surprising, revealing and gratifying.

The result is an emotional coming-of-age story reminiscent at times of 2022 gut-puncher *Close*, sensitively scored by the late Ryuichi Sakamoto and elegantly lensed by *Shoplifters* DoP Ryûto Kondô.

**NEIL SMITH**

**THE VERDICT** This is a poignant and mysterious addition to the Hirokazu Kore-eda canon, finely acted and impeccably crafted throughout.

## HIGH & LOW: JOHN GALLIANO 15

★★★★☆ **OUT 8 MARCH** CINEMAS

Kevin Macdonald's (*Touching the Void*) nuanced documentary charts the rise, fall and comeback of British fashion designer John Galliano, who was sacked as creative director of Dior in 2011; a French court later found him guilty of antisemitic and racist rants in a public setting. Alongside illustrative film clips (*The Red Shoes*, Abel Gance's *Napoleon*) and footage of his workaholic subject's headline-grabbing shows, Macdonald interviews friends and high-profile colleagues of Galliano, as well as the man himself. Just how repentant he is remains ambiguous. **TOM DAWSON**

## THE PERSIAN VERSION 15

★★★☆☆ **OUT 22 MARCH** CINEMAS

Maryam Kershavarz's buoyant comedy follows the trials of Leila (Layla Mohammadi), a New York-based Iranian-American would-be screenwriter enduring strained relations with her immigrant family, especially mum Shireen (Niousha Noor). Kershavarz is good on cultural differences – not least the impact Leila's sexuality makes – and has a fine sense of comic timing, with Tom Byrne's British drag queen a real hoot. Mohammadi is also a compelling lead. But a long-winded third act, as family secrets come to light, hampers the film's otherwise breezy nature. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

PICTUREHOUSE, BLUE FINCH, MUBI, SOVEREIGN, SONY, DOGWOOF, ALTITUDE



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

# COPA 71 PG

## Goal power...

★★★★★ **OUT 8 MARCH** CINEMAS

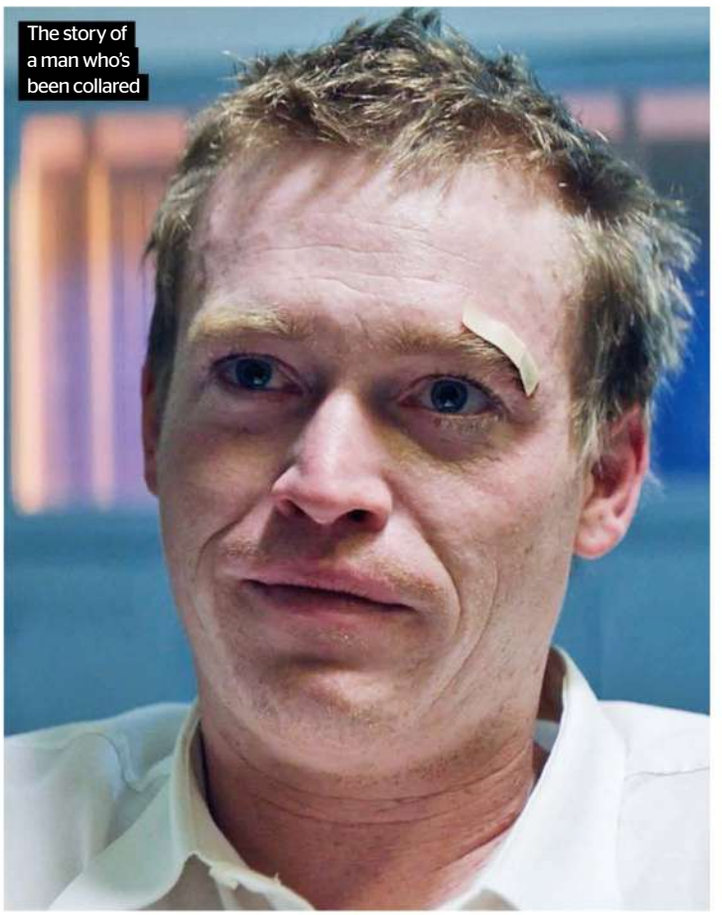
**Long before football's first Women's World Cup made headlines in 1991, there was an unofficial version held in Mexico in 1971, which time – or perhaps FIFA – has forgotten. Co-directed by Rachel Ramsay and James Erskine, and produced by Serena (who also narrates) and Venus Williams, this entertaining documentary aims to right that wrong, introducing players from the tournament and the hardships they endured to be recognised in a male-dominated industry.**

In the UK, the FA officially banned women's football from 1921 to 1971. It was a similarly depressing story elsewhere. Mexican star Silvia Zaragoza describes being beaten and screamed at by her father for trying to join in games; Italian ace Elena Schiavo recalls, 'The boys wouldn't let me play.' But in the aftermath of the men's World Cup, held in Mexico in 1970, local entrepreneurs decided to organise a women's competition to keep the money flowing in.

As vividly coloured vintage footage shows, it was a thrilling tournament that caught the imagination of the country and, briefly, turned the players into national heroes. 'It felt like we'd been given wings,' says France's Nicole Mangas. It wasn't long, however, before they saw the beautiful game's uglier side. Packed with gleefully candid interviews and buoyed by a joyous soundtrack, *Copa 71* restores these pioneers to their rightful place in history. **MATT GLASBY**

**THE VERDICT** A timely documentary with a spring in its step and fire in its belly.

A victory for sporting docos



The story of a man who's been collared

# DOGMAN 15

## Arf-decent...

★★★★★ **OUT 11 MARCH** BD, DIGITAL

**The latest from writer/director Luc Besson is a curious tale of one man and his dogs. The man is Douglas (Caleb Landry Jones), who's been arrested for an initially unspecified crime. Wounded and bloody, he's dressed in a blonde wig and a pink evening dress. In the back of his van are his 'babies', a pack of dogs that obey his every command.**

In his cell, Douglas meets Evelyn (Jojo T. Gibbs), a kindly psychiatrist to whom he feels compelled to reveal his backstory. Given its depiction of a lonely soul in the city, some may compare this New Jersey fable with Besson's 1994 classic *Léon*. Here, Douglas only truly finds companionship with his furry friends. Their only flaw? Trusting humans, he says. Jones relishes the flamboyance of the character, an avenging angel in a satin gown, although the best scenes come when he's shorn of make-up, talking one-on-one with Gibbs in the cell.

The film's urge to inject bouts of ultra-violence proves its biggest misstep. When Besson unleashes the dogs of war, it all becomes rather tedious – a shame, because the idea of a pup-loving Pied Piper has merit. Just for good measure, *DogMan* throws in a Robin Hood-like procedural (involving stolen jewellery) and an overly zealous cop (Christopher Denham). It's a big old mess of a movie, in other words: flawed but fun. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

**THE VERDICT** Besson's return to moviemaking has its moments, but it's hardly the dog's bollocks.

On-screen queen: Lily Sullivan

## MONOLITH 15

### A tale to make you brick it...

★★★★★ **OUT NOW** DIGITAL

**A hit on the festival circuit, Matt Vesely's absorbing debut will likely appeal to anyone who enjoyed such low-budget, high-concept sci-fi thrillers as *Cube*, *The Man from Earth* and *Coherence*.**

Shot almost entirely inside a remote modernist house, it's dominated by close-ups of an unnamed protagonist, the film's only on-screen character, played by *Evil Dead Rise*'s Lily Sullivan. A disgraced journalist who failed to corroborate a big story, she's now reduced to hosting a clickbait podcast called *Beyond Believable* – which aptly describes the tale she's now chasing, about a handful of people receiving black bricks that induce unnerving visions. Then a package arrives on her own doorstep...

A film about the power of storytelling, this hi-tech equivalent of a creepy campfire tale spreads its dread without recourse to volatile camera moves, hostile cutting or blaring sound design. Instead, the strange tale simply unfolds steadily, with our hero starting to twitch and tweak as her guilt, deceit and privilege seep to the surface. Is the black brick an alien artefact? A blank object upon which to project fears? Or is the horror in the telling? Like Bruce McDonald's *Pontypool*, Vesely's film posits the idea of a virus spread through talking.

One thing's for sure: despite a slight third-act stumble, this whispered tale will enter your ear and crawl deep into your brain.

**JAMIE GRAHAM**

**THE VERDICT** There's a hint of Michael Haneke's *Hidden* to this riveting mystery. Give it a click.

## ARGYLLE 12A

★★★★★ **OUT NOW** CINEMAS

Wobbling unevenly between self-awareness and self-satisfaction, Matthew Vaughn's espionage satire is never as fast or funny as it thinks it is. It centres on Elly (the likeable Bryce Dallas Howard), writer of a novel series about super-spy Argylle. The action cuts between the fictional Argylle (Henry Cavill) and Elly's creative pains, then blurs the line until she's swept away on a real mission by spy Aidan (Sam Rockwell). Some predictable mid-film twists add self-conscious fun, but this overwrought romp fires off half-baked ideas without the focus needed to make them stick. **KEVIN HARLEY**

## ORION AND THE DARK PG

★★★★★ **OUT NOW** NETFLIX

You wouldn't call Emma Yarlett's cosy kids' book and arthouse fave Charlie Kaufman natural bedfellows. But DreamWorks' charming animation finds the sweet spot, as Kaufman's script nimbly spins anxiety-ridden Orion's (Jacob Tremblay) bedtime fears into a wild, globetrotting ride with Paul Walter Hauser's wisecracking Dark. Despite its CGI good looks, the film has an indie, handmade feel. Small kids might struggle with the sudden changes of storyteller, but the smart explorations of fear and feelings are clear-cut, wrapped snugly in a rollicking adventure. **KATE STABLES**

## THE BRICKLAYER 15

★★★★★ **OUT NOW**

SKY CINEMA, NOW

Renny Harlin's (*Die Hard 2*, *The Long Kiss Goodnight*) latest casts Aaron Eckhart as the titular action man, an ex-black ops agent turned merry builder who's forced out of retirement by friend-turned-foe Clifton Collins Jr. Along for the ride is newbie agent Nina Dobrev, who has little to do but serve as a woman in peril. The action sequences are choppy and confusing, the script is laboured and the acting verges on caricature. Still, Eckhart is a top-class gravelly hero, bruised and battered but fighting to the end, while Tim Blake Nelson adds class as his CIA boss. **NIGEL PIZEY**

## BALTIMORE 15

★★★★★ **OUT 22 MARCH** CINEMAS

Husband-and-wife filmmakers Christine Molloy and Joe Lawlor (aka Desperate Optimists) bring their customary blend of austerity and eeriness to this portrait of Rose Dugdale, a real-life English heiress and IRA member who took part in a failed bombing attempt using a helicopter and a historic art heist, both in 1974. Flicking between her colourful past and the theft itself, the directorial duo presents a compelling if fractured look at a toff turned radical who was in it for the kicks as well as politics. Imogen Poots, rarely off-screen, compels as the self-deluding, Patty Hearst-like protagonist. **NEIL SMITH**

BLUE FINCH, ICON, NETFLIX, SKY, UNIVERSAL



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

## THE ROARING TWENTIES PG

1939 ★★★★★

**OUT 11 MARCH** BD, 4K UHD

**EXTRAS** ★★★★★ Commentary, Featurettes, Essay

The Great War, the Great Depression, a love quadrangle, four musical numbers… Centred on James Cagney's rising/falling bootlegger, Raoul Walsh's decade-spanning gangster epic is stuffed to the gritty gills, but retains the lean punch the genre was famed for in the 30s. Director and star reteamed for the more-revered *White Heat* (1949), but at its best – Cagney trading quips with Gladys George, or barbs with Bogie – this burns just as bright. **MATTHEW LEYLAND**

## DEVIL GIRL FROM MARS PG

1954 ★★★★★

**OUT NOW** DVD, BD, DIGITAL

**EXTRAS** ★★★★★ Commentary, Featurette, Stills, Art cards

Shot in three weeks in order to use up some pre-paid studio time, this Brit sci-fi quickie has acquired a degree of enduring cult appeal, thanks mostly to MVP Patricia Laffan's imperious turn. The *Quo Vadis* actor plays Nyah, a Martian bound for London who crash lands next to a Highland inn instead. As our devil girl goes in search of male breeding stock, cheap thrills come via Nyah's powers and the half-dozen soapy subplots that bubble up among the pub-goers. **MATTHEW LEYLAND**

## A KID FOR TWO FARTHINGS PG

1955 ★★★★★

**OUT NOW** DVD, BD, DIGITAL

**EXTRAS** ★★★★★ Featurettes, Short, Gallery

A small boy adopts a single-horned goat believing it's a unicorn in this whimsical fable, set in east London's bustling Petticoat Lane market. Carol Reed's (*The Third Man*) first colour film doesn't have much of a story and is guilty of the same broad ethnic stereotyping we'd see in *Oliver!* But there are incidental pleasures to be had, a glam Diana Dors and a pre-Carry On Sid James among them. Alongside the 4K restoration is an earlier short from screenwriter Wolf Mankowitz. **NEIL SMITH**

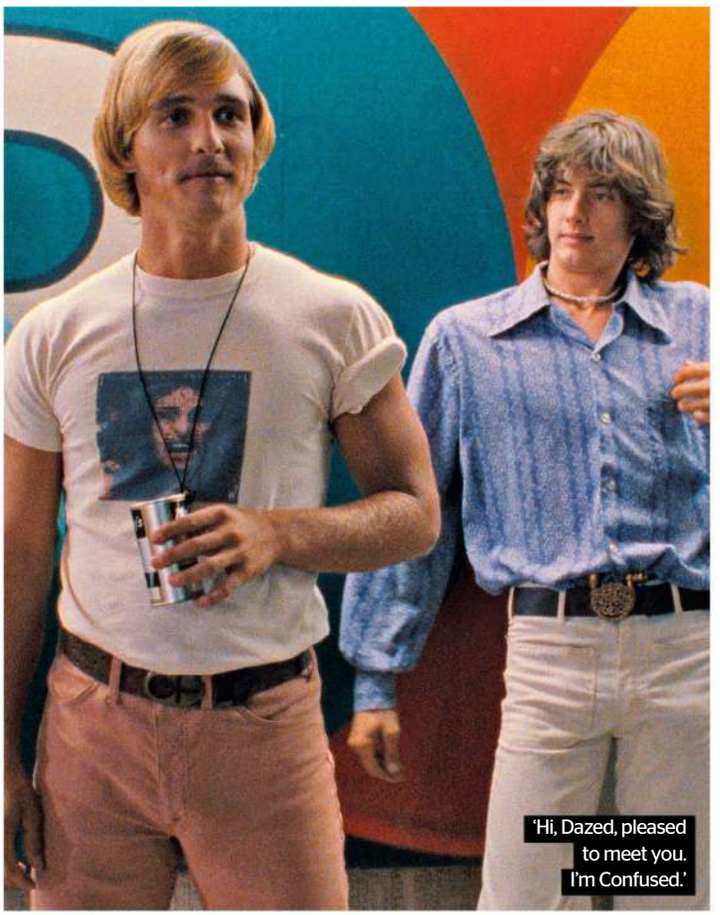
## CIRCLE OF DANGER U

1951 ★★★★★

**OUT NOW** DVD, BD, DIGITAL

**EXTRAS** ★★★★★ Intro, Featurettes, Gallery

*Out of the Past*, *Cat People*, *I Walked with a Zombie*… French director Jacques Tourneur made more famous films, but this thriller is an overlooked gem. Blending Hitchcockian mystery and humour with the eccentricity of a windswept Powell and Pressburger romance, *Circle of Danger* sees Ray Milland travel from Florida to England, Wales and Scotland to investigate the death of his younger brother. Colourful and compelling, it gleams in this 4K restoration. **JAMIE GRAHAM**




SPIRIT ENTERTAINMENT, CRITERION, STUDIOCANAL

# DAZED AND CONFUSED 15

## Sweeeeet emotion picture…

1993 ★★★★★ **OUT 25 MARCH** 4K UHD

**EXTRAS** ★★★★★

Commentary, Documentary, Featurettes, Deleted scenes, Booklet

**As pop-culture writer Chuck Klosterman notes in one of the essays accompanying this 4K UHD reissue of Richard Linklater's evergreen third feature, '*Dazed and Confused* is not a film about how things were; *Dazed and Confused* is a film about how things are remembered.' It's a movie that somehow manages to avoid the comfy trappings of self-conscious nostalgia-bait, while simultaneously making audiences nostalgic for a time and place that 99.9% of us never actually experienced.**

A snapshot of the last day of school in Austin, Texas, during the summer of 1976, *Dazed and Confused* is less a story than a series of interwoven vignettes. If the lack of both narrative drama and the obvious jokes you'd expect from a traditional 'teen' movie are the things that make it feel so real, they're the very same things that worried Universal, leading the studio to interfere with the shoot and scale back its cinema release.

Unsurprisingly, Universal's (mis-)handling of the film looms large in the vast array of extras adorning this double-discer. However, there's plenty of joy to be found here too, with interviews and behind-the-scenes clips showing the fun the young cast of then-unknowns (McConaughey, Affleck, Jovovich…) had together when not on set. **ANTON VAN BEEK**

**THE VERDICT** Hanging out with Richard Linklater's classic coming-of-ager has never been so rewarding.

## IMPOSSIBLE OBJECT 15

1973 ★★★☆☆ **OUT NOW** BD

**EXTRAS** ★★★★☆

Alternative cut, Commentary, Featurette, Video essay, Galleries, Booklet

Adapted from a novel by Nicholas Mosley, this atypically arty drama from John Frankenheimer (*The Manchurian Candidate*) stars Alan Bates as an English writer who, while living with his family in France, embarks on an affair with a younger married woman (Dominique Sanda). Little seen in the UK or US – and then usually in a re-edited international cut (also included here) – *Impossible Object* is no lost masterpiece, but delivers an intriguingly surreal take on the intersection of creativity and obsession. **ANTON VAN BEEK**

## MUDBOUND 15

2017 ★★★★☆ **OUT NOW** BD

**EXTRAS** ★★★★☆ Commentary, Documentaries, Featurettes, Essay

A well-deserved Criterion release for director/co-writer Dee Rees' powerful historical race drama. Nominated for multiple Oscars, this adap expertly weaves together several narrative threads as it follows two farming families – white landowners and Black tenants – during World War Two. Prejudice, vulnerability and bitter human truths come to light in a movie distinguished by Rees' grounded, intimate direction. Unsurprisingly, the array of extras highlight the dedication and resourcefulness that went into the production. **MATT LOOKER**

'A third film? Nope, definitely haven't heard of any third film...'

# BEVERLY HILLS COP TRILOGY 15

### Foley order...

1984-94 ★★★☆☆ **OUT NOW** 4K UHD

**EXTRAS** ★★☆☆☆ Commentary, Featurettes, Deleted scenes

**Ahead of this summer's long-gestating, Netflix-backed fourquel *Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F*, here's a chance to refresh your memory (in 4K, no less) of the past adventures of Eddie Murphy's renegade law enforcer.**

Directed by Martin Brest (*Midnight Run*), it's the 1984 original (★★★★) that's most worth your time. Murphy's potty-mouthed Detroit 'tec arrives in LA on the hunt for a killer, locking horns with the by-the-book Beverly Hills PD and crooked art dealer Victor Maitland (a sublime Steven Berkoff). A cool, buoyant mix of bullets and zingers, all set to Harold Faltermeyer's era-defining synth score, it's peak Murphy. A film every bit as infectious as its star's braying laugh, *BHC* remains a mid-80s Hollywood high point – which probably explains why it bags all of this box set's extras (such as they are).

Tony Scott's 1987 sequel (★★★) – another box-office hit – has its moments, as Murphy reunites with West Coast cops Judge Reinhold and John Ashton to battle robbers-slash-arms-traffickers, including gun-for-hire Brigitte Nielsen. *BHCII* may lack the punch of its predecessor, but is still vastly superior to 1994's belated *Beverly Hills Cop III* (★). Plonking an uninspired Murphy in the middle of an amusement-park caper, the film truly shoots itself in the Converse. Despite its pedigree – director John Landis, *Die Hard* scribe Steven E. de Souza – it's a banana in the tailpipe of action-comedy cinema. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

**THE VERDICT** The original is still one of Murphy's finest hours, but the others – particularly *Beverly Hills Cop III* – are inessential viewing.

## CITY OF GOD 18

2002 ★★★★★ **OUT NOW** CINEMAS

With its chapter headings ('The Story of the Tender Trio', 'Benny's Farewell'), decades-spanning narrative and colourfully named characters (Knockout Ned, Steak and Fries), there's something almost Dickensian about Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund's saga of lives lived, lost and squandered in Rio's crime-ridden favelas. It even has a David Copperfield in observant hero Rocket (Alexandre Rodrigues), a budding photographer whose personal history gets entwined with that of hoodlum Li'l Zé (Leandro Firmino da Hora). Two decades on, this Brazilian *GoodFellas* still packs an adrenalised punch. **NEIL SMITH**

## THELMA & LOUISE 15

1991 ★★★★★ **OUT NOW** BD, 4K UHD

**EXTRAS** ★★★★★

Commentaries, Documentary, Featurettes, Deleted/extended scenes, Shorts, Storyboards, Music video, Booklet

'If you have a problem with the men in the movie, I think you're probably identifying with the wrong character,' says Geena Davis of the response from some viewers to Ridley Scott's groundbreaking road movie. While Criterion's 4K restoration will do nothing to change their minds, for the rest of us there's plenty to savour, not least the disc's handling of the film's stunning widescreen vistas. Expanded extras include Scott discussing his formative years in the industry. **ANTON VAN BEEK**

ARROW, EUREKA, FESTIVAL AGENCY, MGM, NETFLIX, PARK CIRCUS, SPIRIT/CRITERION, PARAMOUNT, POWERHOUSE, STUDIOCANAL, WARNER BROS.



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

## INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS 15

1978 ★★★★☆ **OUT NOW** BD, 4K UHD

**EXTRAS** ★★★★★

Commentary, Documentary, Featurettes, Art cards, Poster, Booklet

The late 70s/early 80s treated cinemagoers to a run of provocative do-overs of 50s sci-fi flicks. The first, Philip Kaufman's rich and resonant *Body Snatchers* remake, relocates the 'pod people' to San Francisco, switching out the original's Cold War allegory for the isolation and paranoia of big-city living. The new 4K upgrade turns out to be a bit of a body snatcher itself, exactly replicating the 2013 Blu-ray in every way, but with improved image fidelity.

**ANTON VAN BEEK**

## CONTAGION 12

2011 ★★★★☆ **OUT NOW** 4K UHD

**EXTRAS** ★★★☆☆

Featurettes

An apocalyptic scenario is treated with intelligence and restraint in Steven Soderbergh's disaster movie, whose depiction of a lethal virus unleashing a global pandemic proved eerily prescient. Celebrity status is no guarantee of survival here, as an all-star cast (Matt Damon, Kate Winslet, Gwyneth Paltrow) races to contain the deadly pathogen. As gripping as it is, however, scenes of the afflicted coughing up blood before being disposed of in mass graves may feel a bit too raw for some to revisit. No new extras on this 4K UHD release. **NEIL SMITH**

## AFTER HOURS 15

1985 ★★★★☆ **OUT 22 MARCH**

CINEMAS

It may be one of Martin Scorsese's less-celebrated films, but this darkly comic trawl through New York's underbelly is still a beguiling work, especially in this big-screen 4K restoration. Griffin Dunne is Manhattan office drone Paul Hackett, who escapes his drudgery by pursuing Rosanna Arquette's stranger into an increasingly fraught world of subway journeys, sculptures and sleazy nightspots. An early entry in the yuppies-in-peril subgenre, its rogues' gallery (everyone from Cheech Marin to Linda Fiorentino) and off-kilter plotting make for a compellingly wild ride. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

## HORRORS OF THE BLACK MUSEUM 12

1959 ★★★☆☆ **OUT NOW** BD

**EXTRAS** ★★★☆☆ Commentary, Featurette, Introduction, Gallery, Art cards

Shocking in its day, schlocky today, the first entry in Anglo-Amalgamated's 'Sadian' trilogy is an odd hybrid of Anglo-American conceits. Michael Gough's crime journo gets overexcited helping the police hunt 'a brilliant maniac' murdering women. Shocker: it's actually him, and he's got a brainwashed teen doing his killing. The result resembles a US youth-in-crisis movie made lurid in London, featuring proto-*Saw* death devices in the basement and an amusingly OTT Gough.

**KEVIN HARLEY**

'No, *I'm* Colonel Dax!'

# PATHS OF GLORY PG

## Kubrick goes forth...

1957 ★★★★★ **OUT NOW** BD, 4K UHD

**EXTRAS** ★★★★☆ Commentary, Featurettes, Booklet

**From the title down, Stanley Kubrick's anti-war masterpiece has a bitter sting to it. 'The paths of glory lead but to the grave' is the quote from the Thomas Gray poem behind Humphrey Cobb's fact-based novel, eviscerating any triumphalist hints. A controlled howl at war's futility, Kubrick's adaptation rings down the years like sniper shots across no man's land.**

Kirk Douglas gives a seething turn as the WW1 colonel tasked with sending soldiers on an impossible mission: to take the impregnable 'Ant Hill'. And he remains beleaguered when, afterwards, he tries to defend three troops court-martialled on bogus charges of cowardice.

The soldiers are scapegoats for their superiors' failures. Class rage broils in the tangible contrasts between the officers' chateau and the trenches, where Kubrick's dolly shots convey despair and horror. The battlefield is worse still, a nightmare of mud and mangled corpses; Kubrick used 600 extras and experimental explosive techniques to max authenticity.

Against this backdrop, George Macready projects callous indifference as the brigadier, perhaps pre-empting the satire of *Blackadder Goes Forth*'s Melchett. You can see *Dr. Strangelove*'s appalled absurdism stewing here, too. Kubrick would make bigger films, of course, after Douglas helped bank him the *Spartacus* gig. But this sure, sharp classic ranks among his finest. **KEVIN HARLEY**

**THE VERDICT** Brutal, bravura, beautiful: Kubrick's critique of military hypocrisy is one of the great anti-war movies.

Wizard of *Oz*: inmate Tobias Beecher (Lee Tergesen) gets the party started

MVP

**ADEWALE AKINNUOYE-AGBAJE** AS SIMON ADEBISI

Emerald's City most fearsome resident, Nigerian drug lord Simon Adebisi, is also its most recognisable. Known for his love of knitted beanie hats and heroin, Adebisi takes leadership of the 'Homeboys' gang, taking no prisoners in his rise to power. Future *Lost* star Akinnuoye-Agbaje brought charisma and a cheeky sense of glee to the big man's sociopathic antics. The show's decline is often traced to S4 and Adebisi's exit, in which he was killed off to accommodate the actor's role in *The Mummy Returns*. *Oz* was never the same again...

## CLASSIC TV

# OZ

### Blood and porridge...

**1997-2003** AVAILABLE ON DVD, PARAMOUNT+

**Welcome to Emerald City: an experimental cell block within Indiana's maximum-security Oswald State Correctional Facility (aka Oz). Overseen by idealistic architect Tim McManus (Terry Kinney), the City's ambitious overhaul of inmate management is unique in that it gives prisoners nowhere to hide; while reform is prioritised over punishment, denizens are locked away in a series of transparent 'pods'...**

In creating *Oz* for HBO, showrunner Tom Fontana tore up the television drama rulebook. Airing two years prior to *The Sopranos*, it was revolutionary in humanising its monsters, trusting audiences to understand their actions without recourse to glorification. 'I wasn't interested in writing heroes per se,' Fontana told Yahoo TV. 'I was planning to make interesting characters.'

Viewers enter this world via lawyer Tobias Beecher (Lee Tergesen), imprisoned after killing a child while drunk driving. 'Beecher's our Dante coming into the Inferno,' said Fontana of the character's descent. His rivalry with white supremacist Vernon Schillinger (a terrifying J.K. Simmons) forms a throughline across six seasons, as both men go to increasingly horrific lengths in their shared vendetta – somehow, the vengeful shit that Beecher takes on Schillinger's face isn't even the worst atrocity either man has in store.

The revolving door of incarcerations, murders and paroles made room for a diverse cast, including Ernie Hudson as warden Leo Glynn and Edie Falco in a pre-*Sopranos* role as prison officer Diane Whittlesey. Meanwhile, Harold Perrineau's Augustus Hill led a Greek chorus of fourth-wall breaking narrators in sharing the inmates' stories, offering a commentary on American prison life between rounds of rioting and shanking. In the cases of Poet (Craig 'muMs' Grant) and Kenny Wangler (J.D. Williams), *Oz* documented those who never stood a chance within society, calling its prison system home instead.

As *The Wire* later did for American policing, *Oz* shone a spotlight on the penal industry and those trapped within it, from low-income gang-bangers to the guards and staff. It tackled topics such as rape, addiction and prison politicking with unflinching grit and a surprising vein of theatricality. It may have been rightfully derided for its sillier turns (including *that* ageing-pill subplot), but was never afraid to take chances – killing off its primary narrator, for example, or following *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*'s lead with its own musical episode.

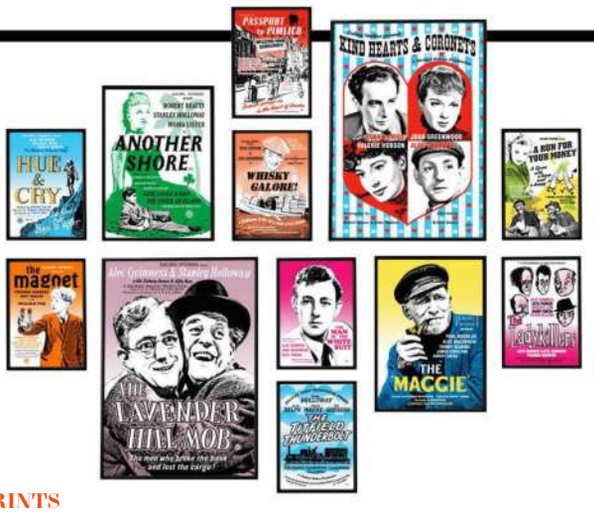
Twenty years later, *Oz* still captivates. Much has changed since, but just as much remains the same – both in the unforgiving, all-consuming penal system and the era of prestige television drama that *Oz* helped usher in. **JOEL HARLEY**

HBO, CBS



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

# EXTRAS




PRINTS

## EALING COMEDIES POSTERS

**OUT NOW**

The Ealing comedy wasn't born in 1949 – but that's the year it properly arrived, with the quadruple whammy of *Passport to Pimlico*, *Whisky Galore!*, *Kind Hearts and Coronets* and *A Run for Your Money*. Marking the 75th anniversary of that banner year, pop-art specialist Art & Hue has created a dozen prints celebrating the aforementioned classics and several more. Produced in collaboration with Studiocanal, the reimagined poster designs are available in three sizes and myriad colour options. Make like a Titfield Thunderbolt for artandhue.com.

COLLECTIBLE

## THE IRON CLAW FOAM HAND

**OUT NOW**

Pay homage to Sean Durkin's stunning account of the Von Erich wrestling family with this *Claw*-some item, which is a lot safer than practising the move it's named for (though we wouldn't advise waving the giant foam creation around in the cinema). If you want to get your mitts on it, though, you'll need to put your hand in your pocket and sign up to the AAA24 program, which offers access to exclusive content and merch. Get in the ring at shop.a24films.com.

A24, ART & HUE, FUNKO, LEGO

VARIOUS

## LOUNGEFLY PET ACCESSORIES

**OUT NOW**

Fandom's literally gone to the dogs with this swanky new range of branded accessories. Loungefly has homed in on the pet lover/collector crossover market with harnesses, leashes, collars and more inspired by Disney, Marvel and Star Wars (that's no moon, it's a Death Star-styled treat bag). The level of detail is as loving as you'd expect; we wouldn't be surprised to see the *Loki* cosplay items heading up their own Disney+ series. It's all under one woof at funkoeurope.com.

TOY/COLLECTIBLE

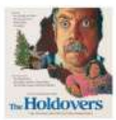
## LEGO STITCH

**OUT 1 MARCH**

If you've always wanted to adopt a naughty alien in a Hawaiian shirt but were worried about the chaos they might bring, here's the solution: a play-and-display building set that won't eat you out of house and home. After all, this Disney critter comes with its own (buildable) ice-cream cone (plus decorative flower). Aimed at older Lego fans and kids aged nine-plus, the 730-piece model has moveable ears and a turning head, so it can look for trouble everywhere. Don't lie low, step up to lego.com. **MATTHEW LEYLAND**

## FRESH SPINS

Ones from the heart and art...




### THE HOLDOVERS

★★★★☆

Undervalued Seattle song-man Damien Jurado provides a pitch-perfect opener for Alexander Payne's latest with the soft-spun melancholy of *Silver Joy*. Elsewhere, era-specific pop/rock/folk cuts sit beautifully with Mark Orton's wistful, wintery score, where rootsy stylings mix with warm woodwinds, bluesy piano and sleepy strings. Sweetly resolute closer *Into the Unknown* is a keeper, while the Christmas songs add succour to sorrows: Orton's *It's Christmas!* has just the right bittersweet seasonal spirit.

### AMERICAN FICTION

★★★★☆

Like Jeffrey Wright's Monk, Laura Karpman (*The Marvels*) lost her father before scoring Cord Jefferson's literary satire. Begun on her dad's piano, the jazzy results – nodding to Thelonious Monk – ripple with understanding and intuition, woven into character with dexterity and feeling. Pensive and deliberately fractured themes slowly give way to warmer, catchier cues (*Hi Lorraine*), before cohering in *Brothers* and *Romantic Ending*: moments of grace and tenderness in a richly nuanced score.

You're gonna need a bigger bottle of Persil non-bio...

# CLASSIC SOUNDTRACK
# GHOSTBUSTERS

**ELMER BERNSTEIN AND VARIOUS** SONY MUSIC CLASSICAL

**Elmer Bernstein composed beautiful music for literary classics, scored for biblical epics and issued rousing fanfares for westerns. But for some fans, he will always be the man who made music for marshmallow monsters and slimy spooks. And as he knew, there's no shame in that: in his comedy phase, Bernstein invested *Ghostbusters* with a sure balance of invention and energy, irreverence and respect.**

Not that he was alone. As was the 80s way, much of the space on the initially released *Ghostbusters* soundtrack went to the songs. Bernstein had his doubts about including certain songs on film, but the veteran composer couldn't question the value of Ray Parker Jr.'s irrepressible title track. Echoes of Huey Lewis and the News' *I Want a New Drug* aside, here was a song destined to haunt the airwaves eternally: resistance is useless.

On its own turf, Bernstein's score is equally sure-footed. After previous comedies with Ivan Reitman, he wanted to make a score that honoured the film's 'fine line' of comedy and serious spectral business. Neither overstating the LOLs or scares, he used the vintage ondes Martenot (an early electronic instrument), strings, piano and more to jaunty, spooky and mischievous effect on the indelible lead cue, an 'off to work we go' theme with the paranormal jitters.

He brought romance and beauty, too, to the melodic and dancing *Dana's Theme*. And with nifty detail, he dotted high piano tinkles throughout the score – presumably because, as Venkman notes, they bug the ghosts. The spooks receive their due with cues ranging from eerily atmospheric (*Fridge and Sign*, the John Williams-ish *Library*) to jabbing (*Attack*). Elsewhere, there's bombast in *Who Brought the Dog* and an almost awestruck sense of pseudo-religiosity in *Gozer*, where Bernstein indulges his 72-piece orchestra. *Mr. Stay Puft* is like music for marshmallow dinosaurs, leavened with a sure sense of the absurd. And for the stand-offs between the 'Busters and the spooks, Bernstein seemed to revisit his western form, only with proton packs instead of rifles.

With an aptitude for lurching moods, the result rolls along like a ghost train, full of twists and turns, silliness and suspense. Bernstein's sense of melody and space ensures the music wears its density lightly, never labouring a point or losing the plot. Even if Parker Jr. banked the awards nominations, Bernstein pulled his weight with a classy score: a fine example of a genius composer at work and play. **KEVIN HARLEY**

ALAMY, BACK LOT MUSIC, MASTERWORKS, SONY



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

Mop till you drop: 'Housekeeper' is one of the roles available to players

GAMES

# LIKE A DRAGON: INFINITE WEALTH

## So money...

★★★★★ **OUT NOW** PC, PS4/5, XBOX ONE/SERIES X/S

**In 2021, Sega outlined plans for a 'super game', to be released within five years – implying that this mooted blockbuster would deliver an interactive experience of a standard beyond its big-budget peers. That project is still to be officially unveiled – yet two years before deadline, the latest entry in the series formerly known as Yakuza effectively satisfies that brief. After the comparatively svelte *The Man Who Erased His Name*, this is a beast of an adventure: a January release that many players will still be chipping away at come December.**

The expansive story takes Like a Dragon overseas for the first time: as well as enjoying the nightlife of Yokohama, affable lead Ichiban Kasuga gets to soak up the sun in Hawaii. He's joined by elder statesman Kazuma Kiryu, whose own journey appears to be coming to an end after being diagnosed with cancer – and as such, his side missions involve ticking off items on his bucket list.

But there are plenty more upbeat activities besides. *Infinite Wealth* has some of the series' most refined asides to date, not least an entertaining riff on *Crazy Taxi*, in which pulling off tricks and stunts on your fast-food delivery bike is just as important as fulfilling orders in good time. Further homage is paid to its publisher's arcade heritage with playable cabinets of *Sega Bass Fishing*, *SpikeOut* and *Virtua Fighter 3*. The two most comprehensive (and time-consuming) diversions, however, owe a debt to Nintendo: Sujimon is essentially Pokémon with recruitable human fighters, while Dondoko Island tasks you with steadily transforming a local dumping ground into an attractive resort, à la Animal Crossing.

But this wouldn't be Like a Dragon without a selection of leather-faced gangsters to intrude on our heroes' tropical getaway. The turn-based combat feels more dynamic than its 2020 predecessor, with character positioning and environmental features factoring into a wider selection of available attacks. You can assign outlandish new roles to your team, lassoing enemies as a Desperado before your Housekeeper (literally) mops up the mess, or paralysing them with an Aquanaut's jellyfish so your Samurai can take aim with their bow. Kiryu, meanwhile, belies his ailing health with the ability to wade into the fray without waiting his turn.

The tone may pinball between silly and sentimental, but in committing so fully to provoking both tears and laughter, Sega has served up 2024's first must-play game. **CHRIS SCHILLING**

## 2 MORE

Recent thumb-twiddlers...

**IMMORTALITY**
★★★★★
**OUT NOW** PS5
Half Mermaid's mesmerising cinematic triptych – in which you match-cut between three fictional films to uncover the mystery behind the disappearance of actress Marissa Marcel – belatedly arrives on Sony's console. With newly added controller audio and haptic feedback, it's more tactile and unsettling still, making this the definitive version of a modern masterpiece.

**PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE LOST CROWN**
★★★★☆
**OUT NOW** PC, PS4/5, SWITCH, XBOX ONE/SERIES X/S
Ubisoft's smart, side-scrolling reinvention of this venerable series combines exhilarating acrobatics with intense, satisfying combat. Protagonist Sargon gets to command not just time but space, though the best of his powers lets him tag screenshots to the in-game map so you need never get lost in this labyrinthine world.

2 MORE

Life-story time...

**QUENTIN BY TARANTINO**
★★★★★
This graphic-novel biography from comics creator Amazing Améziane is brimming with lurid style. Imaginary interviews with Tarantino power the book from his childhood to *Video Archives*, Roger Avary and beyond. Anecdotes mount like bodies as his career begins, propelled by vital collaborators – Harvey Keitel, Sally Menke... The artwork gets the heavy-ketchup flavour of the material, expressing Tarantino's self-mythologising in ways prose can't.
**KEVIN HARLEY**

**LENA HORNE: GODDESS RECLAIMED**
★★★★★
Black-cinema expert Donald Bogle delivers an excellent biog of the groundbreaking singer/actor/superstar. Recounting Horne's life and career via interviews, rare photos and meticulous research, Bogle focuses on the many battles she faced working within a studio system rife with prejudice. He also shines a spotlight on her civil-rights activism. An engrossing study of both Horne's importance to Hollywood history and the shameful politics of the time.
**MATT LOOKER**

## BOOKS

# SO FETCH: THE MAKING OF MEAN GIRLS

★★★★★ **JENNIFER KEISHIN ARMSTRONG** HARPERCOLLINS

**Despite Regina George's doubts, 'fetch' is still happening 20 years on from the original *Mean Girls*. From high school to outer space, pop-culture expert Jennifer Keishin Armstrong shows why with her terrifically readable and rigorous study, a celebration with a sharp eye.**

Proving the success was no accident, Tina Fey took at least 10 drafts and 18 months to perfect the script, drawing on her life, *Heathers* and Rosalind Wiseman's source book. Armstrong assiduously details how director Mark Waters proved crucial, watching every audition during the critical casting process. Insights abound, like how Lindsay Lohan had to be restrained from curling her hair (Plastics-style) too early and how Rachel McAdams used censored f-bombs in rehearsals to get into character.

Alongside breakdowns of everything from props to raps, Armstrong is terrific on the virtues of the friendly on-set vibe and fast-take direction. The MPAA ratings battle is wryly detailed, too; bizarrely, a frozen hot dog caused problems...

But it's in the aftermath that *So Fetch* excels. Eviscerating tabloid 'prurience' over Lohan, Armstrong shows how *Mean Girls* rewrote the landscape for women in comedy and flourished in meme culture, from Trump/Clinton spats to NASA launches. The musical and new film prove its resilience. And while certain ideas about race/sexuality may date the 2004 movie – and Wiseman's profits battles leave a sour taste – the themes of peer pressure and fitting in endure. Truly, the limit does not exist. **KEVIN HARLEY**

*'Mean Girls* rewrote the landscape for women in comedy' (Chris Anton and Lindsay Lohan pictured on set)

## BLACK CAESARS AND FOXY CLEOPATRAS

★★★★★
**ODIE HENDERSON** ABRAMS

The 70s rise of Blaxploitation saw Black culture reclaim the stereotypes that had previously been weaponised against it. Film critic Henderson's account celebrates the highs of the genre without sugar-coating the lows. The book assumes a base level of Blaxploitation knowledge, making it a niche concern, but if you know your *Blacula* (1972) from your *Youngblood* (1978), it's a fascinating deep dive into a much-misunderstood period of film history. **LEILA LATIF**

## KUBRICK: AN ODYSSEY

★★★★★
**ROBERT P. KOLKER, NATHAN ABRAMS** FABER & FABER

Stanley Kubrick was still living when his last full-length biog was published. High time for another then, a task Kolker and Abrams shoulder well in a 650-page door-stopper that paints its subject as a sometimes volatile self-concealer 'who hid behind the grandeur of his work and the privacy of his life'. All the masterpieces are covered, though it's the unrealised projects – collabs with Brando, John le Carré and Ian Fleming, for example – that inform this tome's most tantalising passages. **NEIL SMITH**

## 50 OSCAR NIGHTS

★★★★★
**DAVE KARGER** RUNNING PRESS

Golden glory or mixed blessing? Journo Karger elicits broad responses to 'Hollywood's biggest night' in his lively interviews with 50 winners. A strong range of talents share complex feelings: Barry Jenkins recalls that *Moonlight* mishap ruefully; Elton John thinks he won for the wrong song; Marlee Matlin has terse words for co-star Bill Hurt's criticisms. Others are more gleeful: Olivia Colman and Halle Berry's responses deftly disarm our often justified cynicism about the whole circus. **KEVIN HARLEY**

CHRIS ANTON, HARPERCOLLINS, RUNNING PRESS, ABRAMS, FABER & FABER, TITAN



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

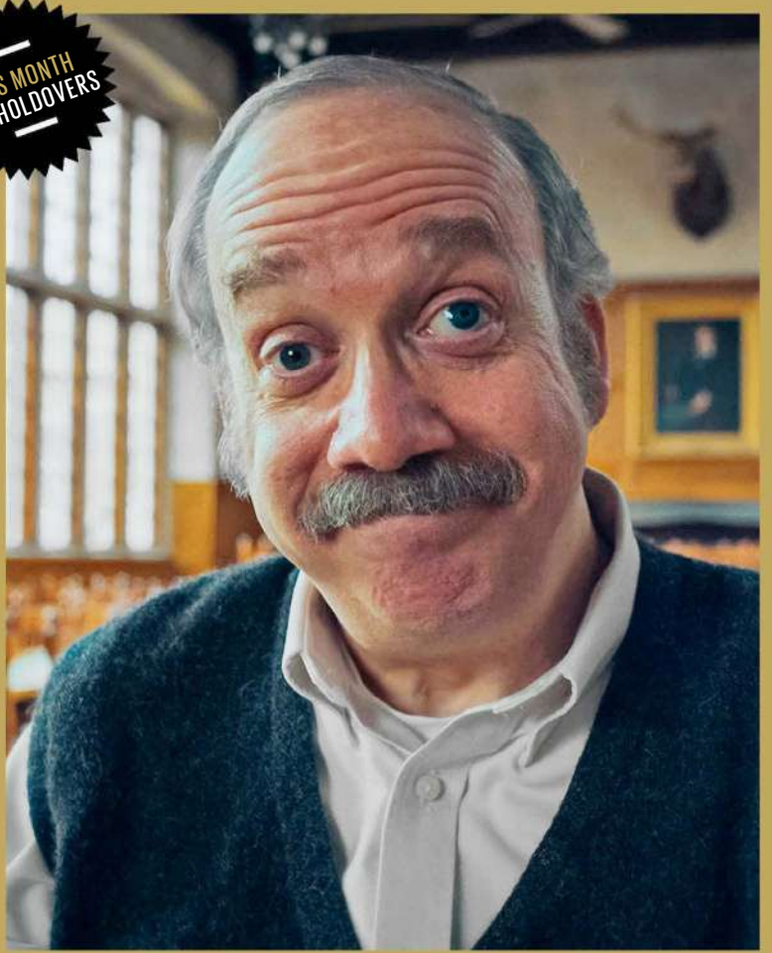
# TOTAL FILM BUFF

CINEMA CELEBRATED AND DEBATED. BOOSTING YOUR MOVIE GENIUS TO SUPERHERO LEVELS...

# IS IT BOLLOCKS?

*Buff* investigates the facts behind outlandish movie plots.

THIS MONTH THE HOLDOVERS



## Q Is crotchety prep school teacher Paul Hunham's fish-odour affliction in *The Holdovers* real?

Trimethylaminuria (or TMAU) is a real, though uncommon, condition that's also known as 'fish-odour syndrome' due to the unfortunate smell it's associated with. The odour can be present in breath, urine and sweat and is caused by a faulty gene that is genetic – but sufferers only get the condition if both parents are carriers. The odour can be triggered by sweating, stress and certain foods – all things that Mr. H. is experiencing during his fraught Christmas break at Barton Academy. The smell comes from an inability of a gut to break down smells from certain foods, creating trimethylamine, which is expelled from the body through sweat, breath or pee. There is no known cure for TMAU but some foods can exacerbate the smell – cow's milk, seafood, eggs, beans and peanuts among them. So Mr. Hunham should be cutting down on his eggnog, bar snacks and shrimp platters.

**VERDICT NOT BOLLOCKS**

# ALTERNATIVE BOX OFFICE

The biggest movies... STARRING CHRISTOPHER WALKEN

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | **THE JUNGLE BOOK** 2016 | $967.7M |
| 02 | **CATCH ME IF YOU CAN** 2002 | $352.1M |
| 03 | **WEDDING CRASHERS** 2005 | $288.5M |
| 04 | **BATMAN RETURNS** 1992 | $266.9M |
| 05 | **CLICK** 2006 | $240.7M |
| 06 | **PULP FICTION** 1994 | $213.9M |
| 07 | **SLEEPY HOLLOW** 1999 | $206.1M |
| 08 | **HAIRSPRAY** 2007 | $203.6M |
| 09 | **ANTZ** 1998 | $171.8M |
| 10 | **A VIEW TO A KILL** 1985 | $152.6M |

# ON LOCATION REEL SPOTS BEHIND THE CAMERA

**WHAT?** In *The Dark Knight*, the Joker and Batman joust on a dark Gotham street and a truck flips in spectacular fashion...

**WHERE? LaSalle Avenue, Chicago, USA.**

**GO?** One of the Windy City's most cinematic streets, LaSalle was used for *The Untouchables* and *Public Enemies*, with the Chicago Board of Trade and its clock a distinct backdrop. Respond to the Bat signal and visit.

ALAMY, DREAMWORKS, WARNER BROS.

*Want us to investigate if a movie scenario is bollocks or snapped yourself at a film location? Contact us at totalfilm@futurenet.com*



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

# BRIDGES IN MOVIES

Spanning cinema for greatness...

1

## THE GENERAL

Buster Keaton didn't have CGI in 1926. So that's a real locomotive plunging from a collapsing train trestle (blown up with dynamite) into the river. A one-shot-only deal, it was the most expensive stunt in silent-movie history. Buster bust a gut to make it happen.

2

## LA LA LAND

The LA freeway flyover counts, right? Then let's include the six-minute opening scene of Damien Chazelle's musical, as people stuck in a traffic jam leap out of their cars to hoof and holler. 'It's three shots stitched together,' admits Chazelle of this 'oner' wonder.

3

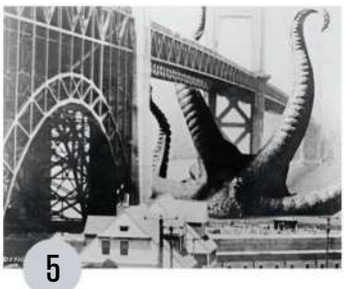
## MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE III

As thrilling as any of the more famous stunts in later instalments, this ballistic set-piece on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge involves drones, a chopper, a firefight and Ethan Hunt being blasted into the side of a car. Tom Cruise naturally did the stunts himself.

4

## STAND BY ME

'Traaaaaain!' The central set-piece of Rob Reiner's exemplary coming-of-age adventure sees a thundering train arrive just as the boys are crossing a towering trestle. Old-school movie magic – long lenses and matte paintings – make the danger seem terrifyingly real.



5

## IT CAME FROM BENEATH THE SEA

The Golden Gate Bridge features in *Vertigo*, *Superman*, *A View to a Kill*, *Pacific Rim*, *Godzilla* and countless other movies, but we're going for Ray Harryhausen's giant octopus attack. The beast only had six tentacles due to budget constraints.

6

## MANHATTAN

It's the poster shot from Woody Allen's ode to NYC: Isaac (Allen) and Mary (Diane Keaton) sitting on a bench at sunrise with the Queensboro Bridge silhouetted against the sky. 'This is really a great city... a knockout,' says Isaac. No argument there.

7

## THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN

OK, this only features two ends of a bridge, but how can we not include James Bond's AMC Hornet corkscrew leap? The perfectly balanced car hit the ramp at precisely 48mph, and... 'Bingo... one take,' recalled director Guy Hamilton.

8

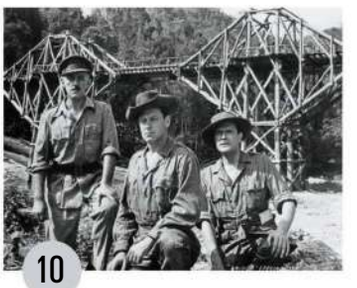
## INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM

'Steven [Spielberg] was really scared... It was a real suspension bridge over [a] 150ft clear fall,' said Harrison Ford of the climactic scene where Indy shakes off his pursuers by cutting the rope. Now that takes (Sankara) stones...

9

## LOTR: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

'You shall not pass!' Gandalf the Grey battling the Balrog of Moria is a gold-standard boss battle. Both wind up plummeting off the Bridge of Khazad-dûm, though the wily wizard returns, suitably white-faced, in *The Two Towers*.



10

## THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI

David Lean's epic tale of British POWs forced to build, well, a bridge on the River Kwai – and the Allied forces' attempt to destroy it. It's claimed the bridge cost $250,000 to construct. The film won seven Oscars. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

*Did we miss something? Let us know on @totalfilm*

ALAMY, COLUMBIA PICTURES, EON PRODUCTIONS, GETTY, LIONSGATE, LUCASFILM, NEW LINE CINEMA, PARAMOUNT, UNITED ARTISTS, WARNER BROS.

REEL ESTATE

**FOR SALE** Beautiful 19th-century property situated in the forests of upstate New York. This off-the-grid, three-storey family home comes with an adjoining farmhouse and corn silo. It's a peaceful area, with minimal noise pollution, but be prepared for the local shops to not be particularly well stocked. The spacious and soundproofed basement is ideal for a big-scale family project. Watch out for the creaky floorboards and the occasional poorly placed nail. Prospective buyers are advised to remove shoes on approach to the property.

## CAR FOR SALE

**FILM:** DEATH PROOF
**VEHICLE:** CHEVY NOVA
**YEAR:** 1970

1970 Chevy Nova with a black-as-night paint job and a wicked skull 'n' crossbones on the hood. Don't be put off by crash history: with a fully functional roll cage and quick-disconnect steering wheel, it's designed to survive any impact. Also boasts a 350-cubic inch V8 engine, TH350 transmission, 650 Edelbrock carburetor, Simpson racing seat and rally wheels that smoke and squeal when doing donuts. Previous owner: deceased. All traces of blood removed. Contact badass women Zoë, Abernathy and Kim for details.

# FLOP CULTURE

## THE ABYSS

In 1989, James Cameron's watery fantasy didn't float with audiences. For once, was he out of his depth?

### Why it was a good idea (on paper)

After thrilling with *Aliens*, James Cameron cast out for a new species of extraterrestrial film. How about *The Day the Earth Stood Still* for the Cold War 80s, except underwater? With an ambitious surface sell, rich subtexts and production wizardry, *The Abyss* seemed set to dazzle deeply.

### What went wrong?

'You've gotta expect losses,' said Cameron to David Letterman, recalling how he sold the underwater shoot to auditioning actors. Cameron was joking, obviously, but the way of water certainly didn't run his way. Shooting in two huge containment tanks in a former nuclear power plant, Cameron grappled with leaks and storms. But the cast had it worse. Trained to dive, they were often weighted to the tanks' base, scared of their air running out – Cameron's air did at one point. Having to act as if using experimental 'breathing fluid', a stressed Ed Harris wept on his way home one night. Otherwise, the cast were either underwater in the dark due to a decision to shoot at night, or bored senseless while waiting to shoot. Some crew members whose hair hadn't gone white with stress had their hair bleached when a tank was over-chlorinated. Meanwhile, execs fretted over costs and other (if lesser) aqua-pics' failures – *DeepStar Six*, *Leviathan* – augured badly for the genre's fortunes. Released a month late to low-grade returns, *The Abyss* lacked sea legs: distracted by his underwater ambitions, Cameron didn't quite land the story.

### Redeeming feature

Harris and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio give palpably fraught (wonder why?) turns as separated spouses. Cameron maxes wonder and tension nicely, too, aided by Alan Silvestri's score.

### What happened next?

After the director's cut, the box-office trickle became a wave of respect for Cameron's flawed but sincere epic. *T2*'s liquid metal and *Titanic*'s waterworks proved he'd been on to something.

### Should it be remade?

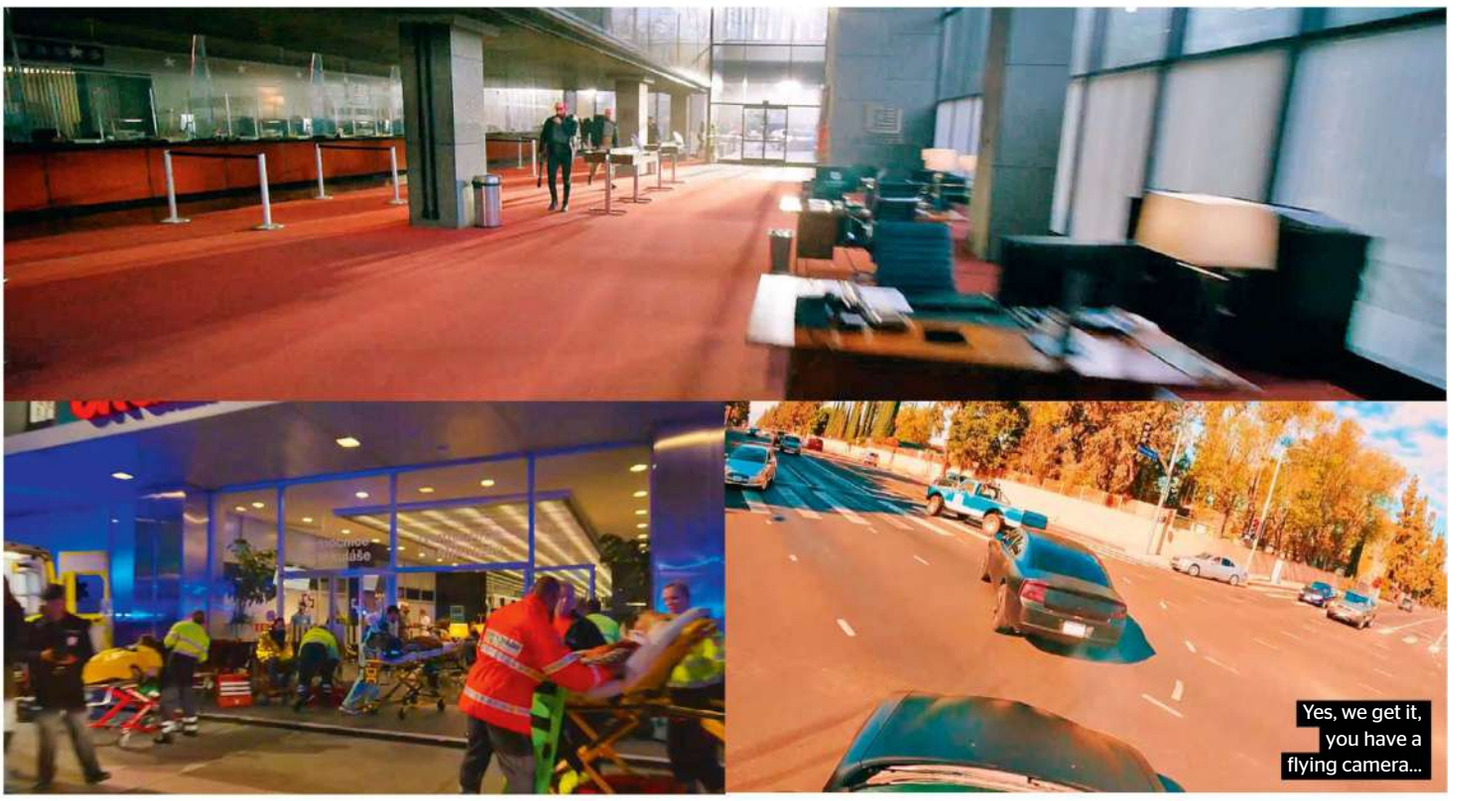
It would take a Cameron to try it, and since he's busy now, that's a no. Just give UK fans that fabled 4K upgrade. **KEVIN HARLEY**

| BUDGET | BOX OFFICE | AWARDS | *TF* STAR RATING | ROTTEN TOMATOES |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| $43m | $90m | 4 | ★★★½ | 89% |

ALAMY, DANIEL CASE



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS




# IS IT JUST ME OR HAVE WE REACHED PEAK DRONE?

MATT GLASBY
@MATTGLASBY

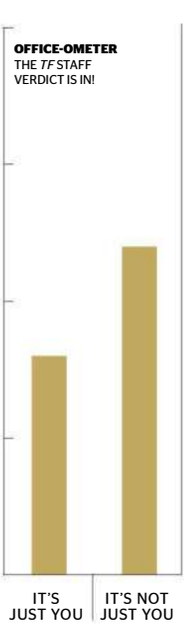
Since rising to prominence in the likes of *Skyfall* (2012), drone shots have become a cinematic constant, flying viewers out of the story like some kind of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). But perhaps it's time to clip their wings a little…

When used sparingly, they can be very effective: *The Endless* (2017) has some beautiful shots that dovetail nicely with the narrative. But in less steady hands they're fast becoming a cliché. Want to show a high-rise office worker sitting bored at their desk? Drone. A car driving deeper and deeper into the woods? Drone. A character dwarfed by the vastness of the city? Drone, drone, drone. There's even a horror film about a killer UAV called *The Drone* (2019). Tagline: 'Your remote has no control.'

Well, quite. Drone shots may be a cheap way to add visual dynamism, but they often draw a disproportionate amount of attention to themselves. A chase in *Day Shift* (2022) is shot by a UAV taking off from inside a car and rising through the sunroof. Why? It looks cool, even though it makes absolutely no sense. *The Gray Man* (2022) features an impressive drone shot that whizzes us into the foyer of a busy hospital – a nice intro to a necessary scene – as well many superfluous ones that start to undo such good work. Michael Bay's *Ambulance* (2022), meanwhile, relies on them so much that there's even a drone shot that whizzes down a corridor, bringing to mind the old *Jurassic Park* adage about whether you could versus whether you should.

In narrative movies, shots are meant to do at least one of two things – ideally both – without taking us out of the story. Firstly, they're meant to tell us something. Unless the main character is trapped down a well, about to jump off something tall, or very scared of heights, all UAV shots tell us is: 'Hey, look, we've got a drone!' Secondly, they're meant to make us feel something, but after the vertigo fades, all that's left is fatigue. Or is it just me?

***Share your reaction at gamesradar.com/totalfilm or on Facebook and X/Twitter.***



ALAMY, NETFLIX

## LAST TIME *SPEED RACER*: AHEAD OF ITS TIME?

**IAN HARRIS**
Terrible, terrible film.

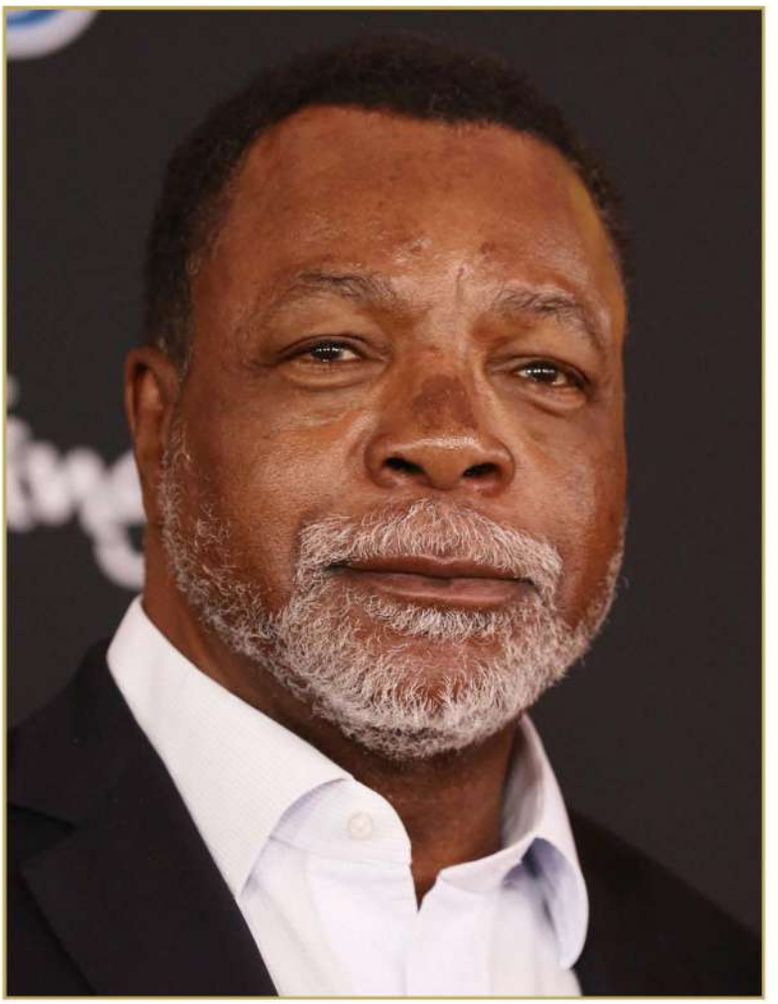
**SCOTT JONES**
Watched it for the first time last month. It was OK, just some kid-friendly, wacky racing fun.

**PEDRO COLAÇO**
Visually it's beautiful. There aren't many movies with this kind of artistic vision.

**BRENDAN TURNER**
Hard agree. Watched with my kids about a year ago and was blown away.

**MICHAEL WEYER**
I didn't like it in the cinema but came round to it on home video. So much better than 90% of today's blockbusters.

1948-2024



# CARL WEATHERS

**When news of Carl Weathers' death broke, a charming anecdote from one of his collaborators went viral on social media. In a 2013 interview for *Vulture*, *Arrested Development* creator Mitch Hurwitz explained the genesis of one of that sitcom's funniest recurring guest roles, in which Weathers plays a cheapskate version of himself. Paid to provide acting lessons for aspiring thespian Tobias Fünke (David Cross), he instead primarily offers tips on thriftiness, such as only buying cars from police auctions and making stew from old chicken bones and leftovers. One might expect that pitching Weathers such a subversion of his celebrity persona – the actor being best known as boxing champion Apollo Creed in the Rocky franchise – would be an awkward proposal. As Hurwitz tells the story, it was in fact Weathers' own idea.**

'It's not going to be just a bunch of Rocky jokes, is it?' asked Weathers, according to Hurwitz. 'Because I direct and I'm a funny guy and I don't wanna just do a bunch of Rocky jokes. Nobody wants that. Maybe I could be really cheap or something?' Given that Hurwitz apparently originally planned to reference *Rocky III* with the cameo, Weathers' canny thinking is directly responsible for one of the show's most beloved gags. And that's a testament to his talents in general: no matter how big or small the part, the presence of Carl Weathers always made a film or show better.

After a brief stint in professional football, the New Orleans-born Weathers started his screen career in the mid 70s. Following bit parts in blaxploitation hits, his role as the magnetic Apollo Creed in *Rocky* helped him become a valuable supporting player in big productions, such as war movie *Force 10 from Navarone* and, most notably, opposite Arnold Schwarzenegger as 'son of a bitch' Dillon in *Predator*. Weathers returned for all the Rocky sequels up to *IV*, in which – spoiler alert – Creed dies in the ring. Maximalist cop thriller *Action Jackson* gave the actor a rare leading role on the big screen. While only a moderate box-office success, it has endured since as a cult classic.

Heading into the 90s, Weathers shone as a regular in crime series *Street Justice* and *In the Heat of the Night*, while *Happy Gilmore* showcased the comic talents he'd put to great use in the back half of his career. He still excelled in dramatic roles on TV, including recurring parts in *The Shield* and, most recently, *The Mandalorian*. A respected director for television, he also helmed two episodes of that Star Wars show, in which he played Greef Karga, earning an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Guest Actor. Both in front of and behind the camera, Weathers delivered knockouts to the very end.

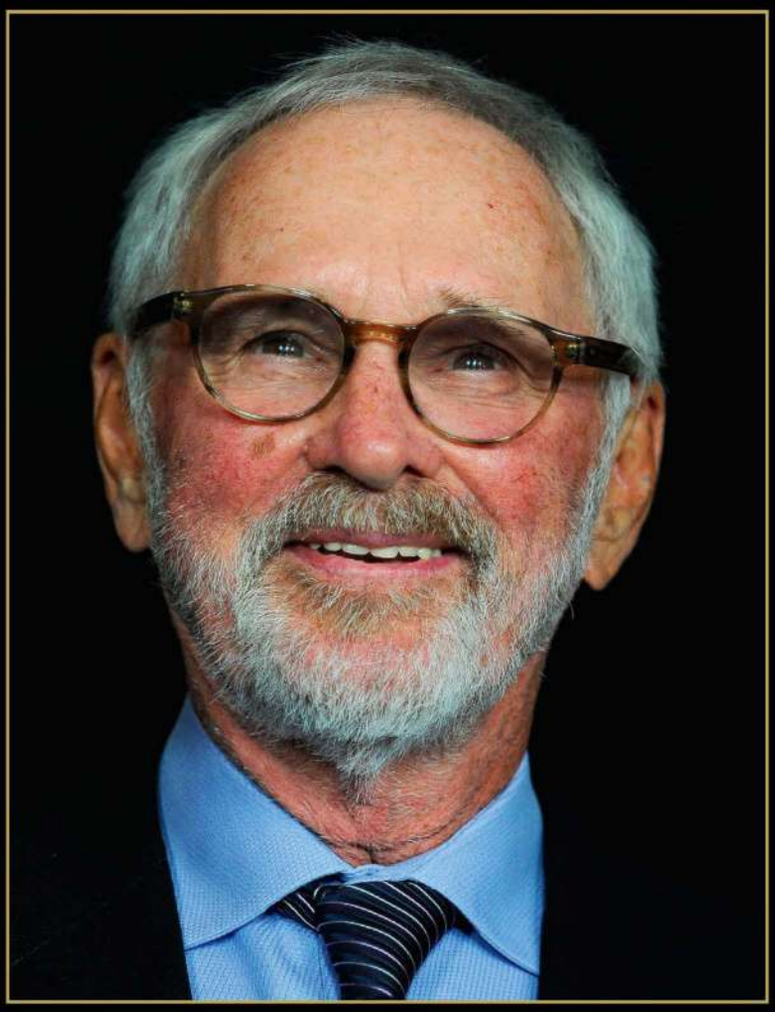
**JOSH SLATER-WILLIAMS**

GETTY



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

1926-2024



# NORMAN JEWISON

**'I make a lot of different movies and I love them all,' said Canadian filmmaker Norman Jewison, whose genre-hopping career took in such diverse features as *In the Heat of the Night*, *The Thomas Crown Affair* and *Moonstruck*. 'The movies that address civil rights and social justice are the ones that are dearest to me.'**

Born on 21 July 1926 in Toronto, Canada, Norman Frederick Jewison was raised Methodist but bullied by schoolmates who mistakenly thought he was Jewish because of his surname. At the end of his military service during World War Two, Jewison got another taste of social bigotry when he hitchhiked through the American south with its Jim Crow segregation. These experiences would inform the social dramas for which he became best known.

In 1967, Jewison's *In the Heat of the Night* investigated racial tension through the lens of a murder story. Set in Mississippi, it pitches Sidney Poitier's Philadelphia police detective against Rod Steiger's racist police chief. A touchstone picture in American cinema, it won five Oscars, including Best Picture. Jewison had previously cut his teeth in Canadian, British and American TV, and had directed Doris Day feature comedies *The Thrill of it All* and *Send Me No Flowers*, along with Steve McQueen drama *The Cincinnati Kid* and comedy war film *The Russians Are Coming, the Russians Are Coming*. But it was *In the Heat of the Night* that established him as a major filmmaker.

During a four-decade film career that culminated with political thriller *The Statement* starring Michael Caine (2003) as a former Nazi executioner, Jewison's films won 12 Oscars from 46 nominations. He was himself nominated three times and won a lifetime achievement Oscar in 1999. His best-known films include early 70s musicals *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, sci-fi action-adventure *Rollerball*, and beguiling romantic comedies *Moonstruck*, which won Cher her Oscar, and *Only You*. Also of note are two hard-hitting dramas with Denzel Washington, *A Soldier's Story* and *The Hurricane*.

'I have tended to show humanity as fallible, sensitive, befuddled, misled but redeemable,' he wrote in his 2004 autobiography, *This Terrible Business Has Been Good to Me*. 'I want people to recognise themselves in the movies I make.' Of his frequent return to the subject of racism, Jewison wrote: 'We have to deal with prejudice and injustice, or we will never understand what is good and evil, right and wrong.'

Jewison died peacefully at his home on Saturday 20 January, aged 97. He is survived by his second wife, Lynne St. David, and by his three children and five grandchildren from his 51-year marriage to the late Margaret Ann Dixon. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

GETTY

ALAMY



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

THE BIG SHOT

# E.T.'S FLYING BICYCLE

In 2012, to celebrate its centenary, Universal Pictures ran a public poll to settle upon the most beloved scene from its glorious history. In second place was a shocked Chief Brody (Roy Scheider) telling shark-hunter Quint (Robert Shaw), 'You're gonna need a bigger boat.' But even *Jaws* couldn't match the sight of 10-year-old Elliott (Henry Thomas) cycling his floating BMX past a luminous full moon with E.T. in its basket.

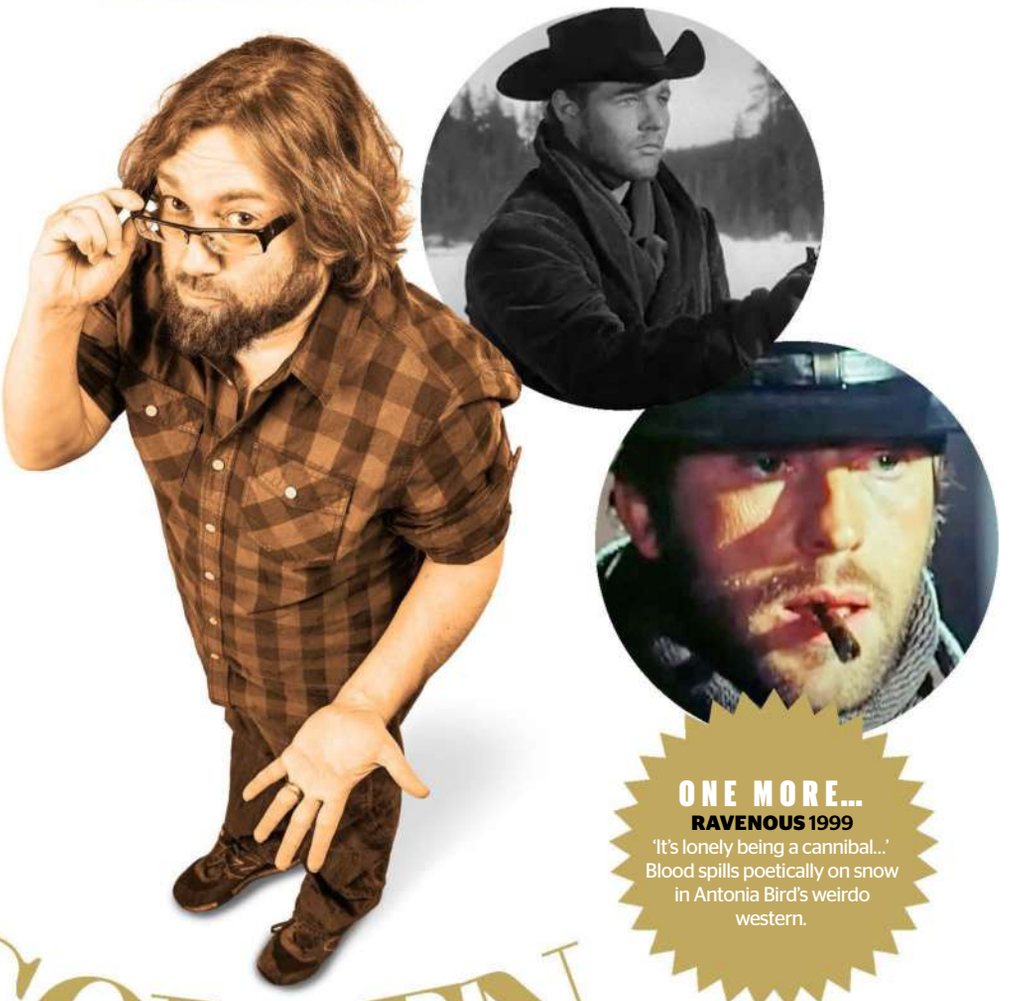
*E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* might have been Steven Spielberg's idea of fashioning a small-scale, personal movie – it riffed on the imaginary friend he conjured up as a youngster – but it's pure cinema born of shimmering imagination and glimmering spectacle. Set in the Californian suburbs, it tells of an alien lost on Earth, and the heart-warming friendship it develops with the equally lost Elliott.

The film's most magical scene, which became the iconic logo of Spielberg's production company, Amblin Entertainment, has Elliott cycling through a misty forest with E.T., wrapped in a blanket, in his bike's basket. Suddenly the bike is not under Elliott's control. It barrels off the edge of a gully but no sooner has it begun to drop than it soars into the night sky to the ecstatic strains of John Williams' dreamlike score. Trees pass far below. And then, the money shot: Elliott and E.T. drifting past the bloated moon, made more memorable still by the fact that Elliott is still pedalling.

'That was me on a bike on a crane arm on a soundstage with a blue screen behind me,' Thomas later said. 'I was going, "Woo-hoo! Wow! Amazing!" Of course, in the theatres you see it with the rear projection, and it's this beautiful redwood forest floating beneath you.'

In an age when audiences knew less about special effects, it was pure movie magic. Film critic Roger Ebert wrote, 'I remember when I saw the movie at Cannes: even the audience there, people who had seen thousands of movies, let out a whoop at that moment.' And so it was that Spielberg's intimate movie, rejected by Columbia Pictures for not being commercial enough, garnered nine Oscar nominations (winning four), launched a million Halloween costumes and overtook *Star Wars* to become the biggest box-office hit of all time – a record it held for 11 years until Spielberg himself surpassed it with *Jurassic Park*.

How's that for flying high? **JAMIE GRAHAM**



# GOLDEN GRAHAMS

Editor-at-Large Jamie Graham unearths underrated classics...

## THIS MONTH
## *Day of the Outlaw* and *The Great Silence*

**Yee-haw! As Kevin Costner's two-part epic western *Horizon: An American Saga* gallops towards cinemas – and with temperatures hitting -4°C as I write this column in mid January – I find my mind returning to a pair of snowy oaters that aren't talked about nearly enough.**

André De Toth's *Day of the Outlaw* (1959) and Sergio Corbucci's *The Great Silence* (1968) are both cold and brutal. In *Outlaw*, cattleman Blaise Starrett (Robert Ryan) is furious that homesteader Hal Crane (Alan Marshal) has fenced off land he wishes to drive his beasts over. Tensions are further cranked up by Hal being married to Blaise's former lover, Helen (Tina Louise). But their dispute suddenly seems small fry when a gang of outlaws led by one-time army captain Jack Bruhn (Burl Ives) ride into the isolated town of Bitters in the Oregan hills, intent on using it – and the four women among its tiny population – for R&R.

*The Great Silence*, meanwhile, is set in Utah Territory during the Great Blizzard of 1899. Hired by a crooked banker, vicious bounty hunter Loco (Werner Herzog's best fiend, Klaus Kinski) has forced some Mormons into hiding in the mountains. But gunslinger Silence (French acting legend Jean-Louis Trintignant) is intent on righting this injustice. For him it's personal: bounty hunters slit his vocal cords when he was a child, after he'd watched them kill his parents.

In both films, a man stands up to a group of bad guys, but neither man is heroic. Moral ambivalence coats all, like the snow that shrouds the land. French filmmaker Bertrand Tavernier called *Outlaw* 'a western that reinvents the genre in a revolutionary way', and so it does, with its stripped-down style, sparse furnishings and lack of positive values. Even the obligatory dance sequence – a staple of the genre, which normally allows for a burst of ebullience – is oppressively shot, the outlaws spinning the women around and around as the scene teeters towards sexual violence.

*The Great Silence* is even darker. 'It really has a claim to be just about the best spaghetti western of all time, and that's in spite of the wonderful films of Sergio Leone,' said filmmaker Alex Cox. Corbucci also made *Django*, which is more famous, but this is his masterwork. For while it's far rougher around the edges than the rigorous *Day of the Outlaw* – there's crude shaky cam and jarring zooms – it's a film of tremendous power, scored, hauntingly, by Ennio Morricone, and boasting one of the bleakest endings in not just westerns but all of cinema. Here, one man can't change things, à la *High Noon*. Law and order is corrupt, the social order is foul. Like Sam Peckinpah's western *The Wild Bunch*, released the next year, there's a gonzo gore climax that owes much to the imagery being beamed into homes from the Vietnam War. But unlike *The Wild Bunch*, there's no romanticism, no release.

And all the while, the snow, like the death and despair, just keeps coming down. In fact, so harsh were the shooting conditions of *Outlaw*, the crew demanded 'danger money'. De Toth responded by stripping off his coat and sweaters and wading out to shoot bare-chested. That's how tough these films are. But worth it. So wrap up warm and wade right in.

**JAMIE WILL RETURN NEXT ISSUE... FOR MORE RECOMMENDATIONS, FOLLOW @JAMIE_GRAHAM9 ON X.**

### ONE MORE...

**RAVENOUS 1999**
'It's lonely being a cannibal...' Blood spills poetically on snow in Antonia Bird's weirdo western.

### See these if you liked...

**McCABE & MRS. MILLER** 1971
Frontier life is bleak as hell in Robert Altman's daring anti-western, set in a snow-cloaked mountain village.

**THE THING** 1982
There are plenty of shivers (and shudders) in John Carpenter's blood-freezing tale of isolation, interplanetary terror and ick.

**THE HATEFUL EIGHT** 2015
Tarantino brings the claustrophobia, mounting tension and ferocious blizzard. Plus a Morricone score.

**THE REVENANT** 2015
DiCaprio's fur-trader is mauled by both a bear and director Alejandro G. Iñárritu, who shot in extreme conditions at the end of the world.

UNITED ARTISTS, 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

# JOHN BARRY

Bold as brass...

## BORN TO SCORE

John Barry Prendergast had movies and music in his blood. The son of a cinema owner and a classical pianist, he was born in York in 1933, spending much of his childhood helping out at his dad's picture houses. During National Service, Barry played trumpet in the Army band and learned crucial arranging skills. In 1957, he formed jazz-pop combo the John Barry Seven, who soon straddled the charts and screen work.

## OUT OF LONDON

Building on *Midnight Cowboy* (1969), Barry became a versatile Hollywood composer. He aced romance (1980's *Somewhere in Time*), sci-fi (1979's *The Black Hole*), crime (1984's *The Cotton Club*), charm (1974's *The Dove*), action (1994's *The Specialist*) and more, even *Howard the Duck* (1986). His superior scores for films like *King Kong* (1976) often deserved better movies, but *Out of Africa* (1985) was a perfect film/composer pairing, earning Barry another Oscar.

## POP PIONEER

After soundtrack gigs on TV's *Drumbeat*, Barry's union with Adam Faith led to film music for *Beat Girl* (1960). Barry continued to innovate, merging jazz, rock and experimental instrumentation from *The Ipcress File* (1965) to TV's *The Persuaders!* (1971-72). Between *Zulu*'s (1964) grandeur and *Walkabout*'s (1971) yearning, his flexibility dazzled. Meanwhile, *Born Free*'s (1966) lyrical music and *The Lion in Winter*'s (1968) bold, brass-led score showed Oscar-winning melodic class and range.

## GONE WEST

After illness in 1989, Barry banked another Oscar for *Dances with Wolves* (1990). Into the 90s, he was a magnet for retro-loving pop artists; David Arnold paid homage with 1997's *Shaken and Stirred* 007 covers album. Late-career projects included the film *Enigma* (2001), a songwriting reunion with Shirley Bassey and a *Brighton Rock* musical. But it was the style and romance of Barry's film work that secured his legacy: indelible, innovative, and unmistakable. **KEVIN HARLEY**

## SPY GUY

'Everything that is cool and fabulous about James Bond is in the music,' said composer David Arnold. For which, thank Barry. After his work with Monty Norman on *Dr. No* (1962), Barry's brassy, sassy scores for 11 Bonds established and amplified franchise fundamentals – style, swagger, seduction. And he made soundtracks sell: *Goldfinger* (1964) knocked The Beatles off the US No 1 spot.

## KEY SOUNDTRACKS

### GOLDFINGER 1964

★★★★★

Peak Bond? Debatable, but Barry's creative control on his second full 007 mission banked lush returns: tense, driving, lusty and cool.

### THE IPCRESS FILE 1965

★★★★★

Licence to chill: with cimbalom upfront, Barry evokes the shivery depths of Cold War espionage for his pensive, jazzy Bond antidote.

### OUT OF AFRICA 1985

★★★★★

Even far from London, Barry was at home. Floating strings, tender woodwinds and climbing melodies make his Oscar-winner soar.

### DANCES WITH WOLVES 1990

★★★★★

Lavish and lyrical, Barry's last Oscar-winner is a sumptuous show of symphonic romanticism, brimming with grace and grandeur.

MEGPHERSON FILM, ICON, STUDIOCANAL, MGM, EON, UNIVERSAL, RANK, PATHE, GETTY, ALAMY

THE *TF* BRAIN

# WHICH FROSTY FIEND ARE YOU?

ARE YOU A STONE-COLD BADASS OR A BIT DRIPPY? DO YOU WIELD THE POWER OF WINTER OR DEADLY WEA-PUNS?

**START**

ARE YOU A SMALL-SCREEN FIEND OR FILMIC COLD FISH?

**SMALL SCREEN**

ARE YOU GENUINELY CHILLING, OR AS SCARY AS A SOLERO?

**MEH**

YOU ARE
**ICE KING**
*ADVENTURE TIME*

**BRRR**

YOUR LOOK: VENOM IN A BLIZZARD OR HYPOTHERMIC DARTH MAUL?

**VENOM**

YOU ARE
**THE SNOWMEN**
*DOCTOR WHO*

**MAUL**

YOU ARE
**THE NIGHT KING**
*GAME OF THRONES*

**FILMIC COLD FISH**

ARE YOU ASSOCIATED WITH VINTAGE ARNIE WORDPLAY?

**YES**

CLASSIC OR CRINGE?

**CLASSIC**

YOU ARE
**SUBZERO**
('NOW PLAIN ZERO')
*THE RUNNING MAN*

**CRINGE**

YOU ARE
**MR FREEZE**
('COOL PARTY!')
*BATMAN & ROBIN*

**NO**

ARE YOU A BADDIE WHO HELPS THE GOODIES AGAINST THE WORSE BADDIES?

**NO**

DO YOU HAVE A NAMESAKE YOU COULD CRUSH INSTANTLY?

**YES**

YOUR M.O.: EXTREME ICE-MAKING OR EXTREME MISCHIEF?

**WOULDN'T GET MY HANDS DIRTY**

YOU ARE
**PRESIDENT SNOW**
*THE HUNGER GAMES*

**YES**

ARE YOU A NINJA WARRIOR OR COAL-EYED KILLER?

**NINJA**

YOU ARE
**SUB-ZERO**
*MORTAL KOMBAT*

**COAL-EYED**

YOU ARE
**JACK FROST**
(1997)

**MISCHIEF**

YOU ARE
**LOKI**
(BORN A FROST GIANT)

**ICE-MAKING**

YOU ARE
**QUEEN FREYA**
*THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER'S WAR*

BBC, CARTOON NETWORK, DISNEY, LIONSGATE, MOONSTONE, SKYHBO, TRISTAR, UNIVERSAL



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

# NAME THE FRAME

Can you guess these eight bar scenes?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

**ANSWERS:** 1. COCKTAIL 2. UNCHARTED 3. FROM DUSK TILL DAWN 4. DESPERADO 5. LEAVING LAS VEGAS 6. COYOTE UGLY 7. FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS 8. THE WORLD'S END

# Dialogue

## Mail, rants, theories etc.

HAVE YOUR SAY
TOTALFILM.COM
VIDEOS · REVIEWS
· TRAILERS · NEWS

@ totalfilm.com 𝕏 twitter.com/totalfilm f facebook.com/totalfilm ✉ totalfilm@futurenet.com

## ★ STAR LETTER

Going to the cinema back in the day used to be a rare treat. I'm old enough to remember the kaleidoscopic oil effect swirling around the screen instead of all the mind-numbing ads. Today, with a bag of sweets costing £7.95, cinemagoing doesn't seem as much of a treat. Maybe at 54 I'm not hip enough to understand the modern film experience. Still, none of the whippersnappers today will have had the joy of experiencing the pure, unadulterated moment of terror in *Jaws* when the head of Ben Gardner suddenly flashed on the screen! I nearly dropped my Orange Maid!

***SIMON THORPE, SOUTHAMPTON***

**Sad to hear that your moviegoing isn't as much fun as it used to be, Simon. Anyone else feel the same? Conversely, anyone happy to be rid of any old cinema traditions? We can't say we miss the pre-online days of relying on the smudgy, microscopic, often wildly inaccurate listings in the local paper. (*The Secret of NIMH* is an X certificate, is it? That must be one Ben Gardner-sized shocker of a secret.) Simon and everyone with a letter printed here will receive a copy of the Daniel Brühl-starring *Race for Glory: Audi vs Lancia*, available on 11 March on DVD via Signature Entertainment. Didn't send an address? Email it!**

### CROSS EXAMINATION

How do you say the title of the upcoming MonsterVerse film? Is it Godzilla times Kong? Godzilla ex Kong? Godzilla cross Kong, Godzilla multiplied by Kong, Godzilla no Kong, Godzilla uh-uh Kong…? And is *The New Empire* the answer if it is multiplication?

***RUSS TRIBE, SOUTHAMPTON***

The *GxK* stars react calmly to alleged pronunciation issues

𝕏

**@SydNick13**

**[On news of an Evil Dead spin-off] 'Regardless of how you feel, new Evil Dead is better than no new Evil Dead'**

**We invited the movie's leading actors into the office for some clarification; one of them shot-putted the photocopier out of the window and the other did an atomic burp that turned the back-issues cupboard into Total Kiln. (We thereafter abandoned our follow-up question, 'Will we see you on *Strictly* this year?')**

### BABYLON WOOHOO

Thanks for the great article on *Babylon 5* [issue 346]. After reading I revisited the show, and had forgotten how good it was. Despite the show being nearly 30 years old, the FX are still of a high quality, but for me, what stands out are the storytelling, emotions and flawed characters. You even ended up rooting at times for the bad guy of the piece, Alfred Bester. I once asked Walter Koenig what his favourite role was, and with a smile on his face he said: 'Bester… I loved playing the bad guy.'

***LEE MURCUTT-BLACKWOOD, VIA EMAIL***

**Great story, Lee, and we're pleased you liked the piece. And thank goodness the commissioning editor realised their mistake in time and didn't ask for 500 words on Vin Diesel clunker *Babylon A.D.* instead. Readers, do holler if there's a show you want to see featured in the Classic TV slot; now is the time to act, *Chorlton and the Wheelies* stans!**

### TWIN EEKS

Enjoyed your Twins in Movies feature [10 of the Best, issue 347]. I'm sure

**WHAT YOU MISSED ON THE POD LAST MONTH**

Red-hot chats with Andrew Scott, Paul Mescal, Jeffrey Wright, Paul Giamatti, Jodie Comer, Austin Butler, Barry Keoghan, Ludwig Göransson and Matthew Vaughn. Plus spoiler-free reviews and more, weekly!

INSIDE TOTAL FILM

**FILM REFLECTIVE INTEREST CURVE™**

| | WEEK 1 | WEEK 2 | WEEK 3 | DEADLINE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| THRILLED | | | | |
| ENTERTAINED | Congrats Matt (new ed) and Jordan (new dep ed)! | | | |
| FLIPPIN' ECK! | | Proposing 'bring cat to work day' post-*Argylle* | Getting star-struck by giant Bluey at toy fair | Searching Amazon for stillsuit ahead of *Dune 2* prem |
| BAD TIMES | | | | |
| RUNNING TIME | | | | |

SEARCHLIGHT, SIGMA LUKE, WARNER BROS



SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

# OFFICE SPACED

## CHATTER 'GEMS' OVERHEARD IN THE *TOTAL FILM* OFFICE THIS MONTH...

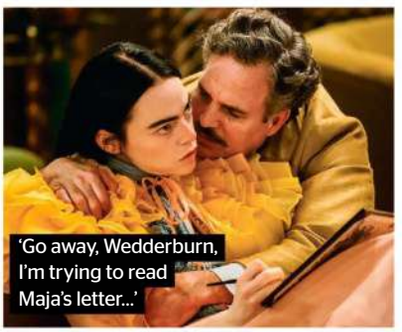
* 'I think of *Jurassic Park* when shelling hard-boiled eggs: "Come on, little one, come on then..."' * **'How about a *Twisters*-themed game of Twister, where you're forced to play in high wind?'**

there were many others you could have included, but I was surprised you omitted Tom Hardy's stonkingly brilliant portrayal of Ronnie and Reggie Kray in *Legend*.
***KLIF FULLER, ASHINGTON***

**It was on the longlist, alongside the *other* Krays movie (the one with two fifths of Spandau Ballet). Not on the longlist: neither of the Jean-Claude Van Damme movies where he plays twins (nor the one where he fights his own clone, for that matter); anything starring Mary-Kate and Ashley; and especially not Adam Sandler starrer *Jack and Jill*, which had less chance of being included than *Topsy and Tim*.**

## DO ME A FAVOUR

I've noticed recently that in-depth making-of movies are making a comeback, with *Pennywise: The Story of It* and *RoboDoc: The Creation of RoboCop* following in the footsteps of *Hearts of Darkness*, *Full Tilt Boogie* and *Lost in La Mancha*. My question – and no doubt all your readers' question – is when are we getting a comprehensive, three-hour documentary about the making of *Mac and Me*?
***THOMAS ELLIS, VIA EMAIL***


'Go away, Wedderburn, I'm trying to read Maja's letter...'

**James Allen**

*[Favourite Lego movie?]*

**'I actually like the *Ninjago* one. The humour is self-consciously cheap and dumb, and I'm there for it'**

**We hate to be pessimistic, Thomas, but we've a feeling you're going to be as disappointed as Ronald McDonald must've been when he won a Worst New Star Razzie for the movie (fighting off such challengers as JCVD and a talking horse).**

## SEEING THINGS

I've just watched *Poor Things*. I was avoiding going to the cinema as I was afraid to watch it, because it looked like *Frankenstein* redone with a very odd 'family' and some strange, crazy places and outfits. Also, director Yorgos Lanthimos won my heart with *The Lobster* and *The Favourite*, but disappointed me with *The Killing of a Sacred Deer* and *Dogtooth*. But OMG! What I would have lost by not seeing this film! Amazing performances by Stone, Dafoe and Ruffalo. A beautiful and colourful world. A story about rebirth and discovering everything in a new way. Just breathtaking.
***MAJA MICHIEWICZ, NEW MILTON***

**We're very proud of you for pushing through your fear, Maja. Believe it or not, even us seasoned cinephiles at *TF* still approach some films with genuine unease. But, after a coffee and a couple of pastries, we were able to face the Sunday-morning screening of *Migration*.**

**YOU CAN ALSO WRITE TO** Total Film, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London, W2 6JR (postal addresses will be used for the sole purpose of sending out prizes)



TOTAL FILM

**EDITOR**
MATT MAYTUM
matt.maytum@futurenet.com
@mattmaytum

**DEPUTY EDITOR** JORDAN FARLEY
jordan.farley@futurenet.com @JordanFarley

**REVIEWS EDITOR** MATTHEW LEYLAND
matthew.leyland@futurenet.com @totalfilm_mattl

**ACTING NEWS EDITOR/EDITOR-AT-LARGE** JAMIE GRAHAM
jamie.graham@futurenet.com @jamie_graham9

**ART EDITOR** ANDY McGREGOR
andy.mcgregor@futurenet.com

**FILM GROUP**
**Editor (*SFX*)** Darren Scott **Art Editor** Jonathan Coates
**Deputy Editor** Ian Berriman **Production Editor** Ed Ricketts

**CONTRIBUTORS**
**Art** Minyi Seo
**Cover manipulation and prepress** Gary Stuckey, Art Production Hub
**Hollywood Correspondent** Adam Tanswell
**Contributing Editors** Paul Bradshaw, Jane Crowther, Kevin Harley, Leila Latif, James Mottram, Neil Smith,
**Contributors** Tom Dawson, Matt Glasby, Joel Harley, Matt Looker, Nigel Pizey, Chris Schilling, Josh Slater-Williams, Kate Stables, Gabriel Tate, Kim Taylor-Foster, Anton van Beek
**Entertainment Editor, Gamesradar+** Emily Murray
**Deputy Entertainment Editor, Gamesradar+** Fay Watson
**Senior Entertainment Writer, Gamesradar+** Bradley Russell
**Senior Entertainment Writer, Gamesradar+** Lauren Milici
**Entertainment Writer, Gamesradar+** Molly Edwards
**Photography** Alamy, August Image, Camera Press, Getty, Shutterstock
**Thanks to** Rhian Drinkwater, Laura Eddy, Ian Farrington, Richard Hill, Heather Seabrook, Matt Yates (Production), Nick Chen, Richard Jordan
**Cover image** Courtesy of Prime Video

**ADVERTISING**
Media packs are available on request. Please contact Rosie Liddington.
**Commercial Director** Clare Dove clare.dove@futurenet.com
**Head of Commercial** Jon Restall jon.restall@futurenet.com
**Account Manager, Gaming & Film** Rosie Liddington rosie.liddington@futurenet.com

**INTERNATIONAL LICENSING**
*Total Film* is available for licensing and syndication. To find out more, contact us at licensing@futurenet.com or view our available content at www.futurecontenthub.com
**Head of Print Licensing** Rachel Shaw

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**
UK orders and enquiries **0844 848 2852**; overseas orders & enquiries **+44 (0)1604 251 045**
Online enquiries **www.magazinesdirect.co.uk** Email **totalfilm@magazinesdirect.co.uk**

*Total Film* (ISSN 1366-3135 USPS 23870) is published monthly with an extra issue in April by Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, UK. The US annual subscription price is $168.87. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container Inc., co BBT 150-15 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn Brooklyn NY 11256. US POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Total Film*, Air Business Ltd, c/o World Container Inc., 150-15 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Subscription records are maintained at Future Publishing, co Air Business Subscriptions, Rockwood House, Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3DH, UK.

**MARKETING AND CIRCULATION**
**Global Trade Marketing Director** Victoria Chappell
**Head of Subscriptions** Sharon Todd
**Direct Marketing Campaign Manager** William Hardy
**Newstrade Director** Ben Oakden

**PRINT, PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION**
**Production Manager** Frances Twentyman
**Head of Production, UK & US** Mark Constance
**Production Project Manager** Clare Scott
**Senior Ad Production Manager** Jo Crosby
**Ad Production Coordinator** Emma Thomas
**Digital Editions Controller** Jason Hudson
**Printed in the UK by** William Gibbons & Sons, on behalf of Future
**Distributed by** Marketforce, 2nd Floor, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London E14 5HU. Tel: 0203 787 9001

**MANAGEMENT**
**Managing Director, TV & Film** Matthew Pierce
**SVP Consumer** Kevin Addley
**Head of Art & Design** Rodney Dive
**Editorial Production Manager** Stuart Dade
**Director of Group Finance** Oli Foster

All contents © 2024 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein.

If you submit material to us, you warrant that you own the material and/or have the necessary rights/permissions to supply the material and you automatically grant Future and its licensees a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in any/all issues and/or editions of publications, in any format published worldwide and on associated websites, social media channels and associated products. Any material you submit is sent at your own risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents, subcontractors or licensees shall be liable for loss or damage. We assume all unsolicited material is for publication unless otherwise stated, and reserve the right to edit, amend, adapt all submissions.

**ISSN** Total Film 1366-3135

We encourage you to recycle this magazine, either through your household recyclable waste collection service or at a recycling site. We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from responsibly managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. The paper in this magazine was sourced and produced from sustainable managed forests, conforming to strict environmental and socioeconomic standards.

ipso Regulated | Widely Recycled | **25,779** (Jan-Dec 2022) **18,019** Print **7,760** Digital | abc

FUTURE
Connectors. Creators. Experience Makers.

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com

Chief Executive Officer **Jon Steinberg**
Non-Executive Chairman **Richard Huntingford**
Chief Financial and Strategy Officer **Penny Ladkin-Brand**

Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

# 60 SECOND SCREENPLAY

SPOILER ALERT!

*TF* SAVES YOU THE COST OF A MOVIE EVERY MONTH. THIS ISSUE: **AQUAMAN AND THE LOST KINGDOM**

**WORDS MATT LOOKER**

**FADE IN:**

**EXT: ATLANTIS**
JASON AQUAMOMOA and AMBER HEARD are now married and have a newborn son who can already talk to fish. Meanwhile, baddie YAHYA ABDUL-MATEEN II finds a broken trident.

**YAHYA ABDUL-MATEEN II**
It'll probably be fine if I just put these pieces togeth-aaarrgh!!

**PILOU ASBÆK**
Here, have some flashbacks to the last film. Yes, it's painful, but I can help you get revenge.

**EXT: ATLANTIS – FIVE MONTHS LATER**
AQUAMOMOA learns that his new role as king of Atlantis involves actually ruling Atlantis.

**AQUAMOMOA**
Global warming is destroying the oceans! We should let the people on land know that we exist so that they recycle!

**ATLANTIS COUNCIL MEMBER**
No! Even though they know about Krypton and Metahumans and Black Adam probably, we have to stay hidden. No one can know we're here.

YAHYA ABDUL-MATEEN II ram-raids Atlantis with a giant submarine. AMBER HEARD defends on a robot shark rather than a real one, for some reason. YAHYA ABDUL-MATEEN II escapes.

**NICOLE KIDMAN**
He was trying to steal our secret MacGuffin Juice, which our ancestors used before they discovered that it's bad for the environment.

**AQUAMOMOA**
So he's trying to kill us AND he's releasing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere? We're gonna need help from someone unlikely…

**INT: PRISON**
AQUAMOMOA frees his skinny brother PATRICK WILSON using an octopus spy suit and an actual octopus spy. PATRICK WILSON touches water and becomes hench.

**PATRICK WILSON**
I was the villain in the last film, and this changes nothing. I'm not going to suddenly start liking you. This film wouldn't be that ridiculous!

They visit a fish casino where a fish singer entertains a fish mobster. AQUAMOMOA waterboards him with air to find out where YAHYA ABDUL-MATEEN II is.

**PATRICK WILSON**
You know, you'd be a better king if you learned to build bridges. That's a metaphor. Well, not really.

**INT: VOLCANO LAIR**
They sneak into YAHYA ABDUL-MATEEN II's evil volcano lair and are immediately discovered. PATRICK WILSON fights a giant robot squid.

**YAHYA ABDUL-MATEEN II**
I am mega-powerful thanks to my MacGuffin-Juice-powered suit! And my magic trident! And my monster possession!

He lasers PATRICK WILSON for touching his trident. KING DOLPH LUNDGREN arrives and destroys everything. YAHYA ABDUL-MATEEN II escapes.

**PATRICK WILSON**
Guys, the trident gave me a vision. It was created by PILOU ASBÆK, but now he's a monster trapped inside it and he needs royal blood to be free.

**AQUAMOMOA**
Well, we're all fine and safe, so everything is – oh wait, I nearly forgot I have a son now!

**INT: AQUAMOMOA'S HOUSE**
Despite his giant tech-suit and glowing red eyes, YAHYA ABDUL-MATEEN II manages to kidnap AQUAMOMOA JR. AQUAMOMOA then attacks with a sea-creature army.

**YAHYA ABDUL-MATEEN II**
I have the full power of PILOU! Nothing can stop me!

He throws the trident, but PATRICK WILSON catches it and PILOU ASBÆK immediately transfers his possession to him instead. He fights AQUAMOMOA.

**AQUAMOMOA**
Even though you tried to kill me in the last film, I've grown quite fond of you in this one. Let's be brothers. I love you.

**PATRICK WILSON**
Aww, OK.

PATRICK WILSON gets over his possession. They defeat PILOU ASBÆK, YAHYA ABDUL-MATEEN II dies and everything else is wrapped up neatly.

**AQUAMOMOA**
Because of our new family bond, I won't send you back to prison, Patrick. Instead we'll pretend you died in the fight. See how nice I am?

**EXT: UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE**
AQUAMOMOA announces to the world that Atlantis exists and then whoops loudly. Meanwhile, PATRICK WILSON begrudgingly enjoys a cheeseburger.

**THE AUDIENCE**
So that's the last ever scene of the DCEU? That's… apt. In a way, we have all just begrudgingly enjoyed a cheeseburger.

**FIN**

**NEXT ISSUE: THE BEEKEEPER**

WARNER BROS.


NEXT ISSUE
ON SALE 28 MARCH

SUBSCRIBE TODAY
AND ENJOY GREAT SAVINGS!
See page 44 for details

SAVE 35%




SUBSCRIBE AT TOTALFILM.COM/SUBS

BIG ISSUE

SUBSCRIBE & SUPPORT

If you can't visit your local vendor regularly then you can support us now with a four-week subscription (which you can cancel at any time).

You'll be supporting our frontline teams, who provide sales support to vendors, arrange selling locations and help vendors with digital and financial inclusion.

**Subscribe from just £4 per week.**

**bigissue.com**

THE JOCKEY CLUB VENUES

# LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION!

The perfect scene requires the ideal backdrop.

Whether you're working on the next blockbuster, or commercial project, The Jockey Club's iconic London locations offer just that.

FIND OUR MORE VISIT THEJOCKEYCLUB.CO.UK/FILM
EMAIL tracy.rusbridge@thejockeyclub.co.uk OR CALL 01372 461 254